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AT THIS MOMENT AN UNEXPECTED OBSERVER APPEARED AND WATCHED
JIM RIGGAN'S PROCEEDINGS.

OR,
THE OWLS' NEST UGLY BROOD.

BY GEORGE C. JENKS,
AUTHOR OF "GIT THAR OWNEY," "SLEEPLESS
EYE," ETC., & C.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

SCENE, East River. Time, midnight.

A deep fog overhangs the city of New York, and extending across the river and far out into the bay, envelops everything in a murky curtain that makes the vessels moored at the wharves look twice their natural size, while the sleeping city in the distance is completely hidden from view, the only indications of its existence being the lights that dimly twinkle here and there from the summit of an electric light mast or in the windows of newspaper offices and telegraph operating rooms.

Occasionally a ferry-boat, with its many illuminated windows glaring redly through the fog, moves

slowly and awkwardly from the mysterious impenetrable region on the one side, and after gyrating for a minute or so in the space within the scope of the observer's vision, passes away on the other, and is lost to sight, where it might be in another world but that the monotonous ringing of its warning bell gives proof that it is still cautiously feeling its way to its "slip" on the New York shore.

It is one of the foggy nights that the East River claims as peculiarly its own; a night when dark deeds can be perpetrated with impunity, and when the officers of the law are called upon to exercise their utmost vigilance; a night when the watch on board the thousands of vessels lining the great city keep a weather eye open for the rope and junk thieves that infest the river.

The lights of the bridge mark a long chain of coruscations high up in the fog-clouds, which look as if it might be a connecting cable between some fugitive planet and our own great, gray world.

"Pull easily, Jim. We can't afford to go blundering around here very long. We've got to make that ere craft right straight, and—"

"Hist! Didn't yer hear nothin'?"

"Nary a thing. What did yer think yer heard?"

"Oars! Thought I did."

"Guess yer thoughts run away with yer. My ears are as sharp as yours, an' I didn't hear nothin'."

"Well, all right. Pull all!"

The speakers were the occupants of a yawl that had just emerged from the shadow of a bark whose squat hull and stiff, solid-looking masts, with hardly any taper to them, proclaimed a vessel of German build, even if the word "Bremen" had not been painted, with much gilt flourish, on her bow.

The yawl was a big, clumsy affair, painted black, and was evidently built more for its storage capacity than for speed.

The two men seated in her were each pulling a pair of oars, and looked quite as rowdyish as their boat. Their rough sack coats were tightly buttoned around them, and their large slouch hats were pulled well down over their eyes, as if they were averse to looking humanity directly in the face.

They rowed slowly up the river in the fog, keeping a sharp lookout, as far as the mist would allow them on every side.

What was their mission?

Whatever it was, there could be no doubt that it was of a secret nature.

That it was unlawful, too, was pretty evident from the appearance of the boat and its occupants.

"Easy, Jim; there she is! Just beyond that Canadian schooner. Don't you see her bowsprit? I would know her shape among a thousand."

"Right you are. Hard a-port!"

The two men swung their yawl around and ran in between the Canadian schooner and a handsome yacht that lay as if asleep in the fog.

Her canvas was all out of sight, her ropes were neatly coiled, while every brass rail, hoop or ornament about her was polished to the highest pitch.

The yacht was ship-shape from bowsprit to taffrail, and from pennant to keel.

"Ain't she a beauty?" whispered the man whom his companion had called Jim.

"Oh, stow yer gaff, Jim Riggan. We ain't here to go into fits of admiration over any craft. We've got business to 'tend to. See any one aboard?"

"Not even a watch."

"Well, you can bet there's some snoozer parading around them decks."

"That won't make no difference so long's there's no one in the cabin, will it, Bill?"

"Provided the aforesaid snoozer don't happen to look over the gunwale and spot our game. Easy, Jim!"

The two men pulled softly into the narrow space between the schooner and the yacht. Then they unshipped their oars, which had been carefully muffled and placing their hands on the side of the yacht, guided their boat toward her stern.

A smothered oath burst from Bill Sharpe, the last speaker—Ugly Bill Sharpe as he was known along the water front.

"There's a strong light in the cabin," he muttered.

"That's so. Then we must wait a while," returned his companion, philosophically.

"And be scooped in by the river police! Not much. We've either got to put this thing through now or give it up for to-night."

"Well, what shall we do? We can't introduce ourselves in the cabin, tell 'em what we want, and then take it from under their very noses, can we, Bill? Be reasonable."

"Shut up and listen."

"I'm a-listenin'."

"Pull right in under the window."

The two dragged their boat along until it was immediately under the stern, which had a large window on each side, that could be fastened with water-tight shutters in very rough weather, but that was protected with thick plate glass sashes stout enough to withstand the assaults of any ordinary freshening breeze.

"Now, Jim, climb up in them chains and take a peep into the cabin, so that we can have some idea what's goin' on."

Without another word Riggan seized the rudder-chain, and then those of the anchor—for the yacht was not moored close to the wharf—and drew himself up to the window.

Cautiously he brought his eyes on a level with the sash-light.

"Well, how is it, Jim? What's the matter with you? Are yer paralyzed?" asked Ugly Bill, impatiently. "What can yer see?"

"By George, he's asleep!"

"Who's asleep?"

"Why, the feller we come to see."

"Where is he?"

"Why, he's a-layin' in the bunk, with the lamp shinin' in his face, an' he's snorin' like a good 'un. At least, I guess he's a-snorin', though of course I can't 'zactly hear him."

"Any one else there?"

"Nary a one."

"Good! D'y'e see the tomato-can?"

"Yes. It's right on the table. I guess he's been a-showin' it to some one. It's a beauty, too—all carved and chased with fairies and ships and things, and I guess it'll melt down to ten pounds solid silver."

"We'll make old Schutzenstein shell out a fifty for it, then."

"Better wait till we get it, hadn't we, Bill?"

"We'll get it. It's only one person's job. You can snatch it without waking that feller, can't yer? I'll stay down here and watch."

"Of course. Give me all the work, as usual," grumbled Riggan, adding, under his breath: "I'll bring you up short some day, Bill Sharpe, as sure as my name is Riggan."

"Hurry up there, Jim! I thought I heard oars just now myself."

"Well, mind you give me the tip if any one comes, Bill. I don't want to do no seven years at Sing Sing for no such picayune job as this here."

"Go ahead and do yer work. I'll 'tend to this end of the business," was Ugly Bill's petulant reply.

The window was fastened, but Jim Riggan's jack-knife soon overcame that difficulty.

The slight noise he made did not disturb the sleeper, who, as Jim had said, was the only person in the elegantly-furnished cabin—a powerfully-built young man of perhaps twenty years of age, with regular, classic features, shaded by a tangle of thick black curls. He was dressed in navy-blue trousers, with a blue flannel yawl-shirt, open at the throat, around which a black silk handkerchief was loosely tied with a sailor's knot. His straw hat had fallen on the carpeted floor. He was fast asleep, and as he lay in his easy attitude in his bunk, was the ideal of athletic beauty.

The cabin was fitted up with every elegance that art could suggest and money purchase. Pictures adorned the walls, a splendid chandelier hung from the richly-frescoed ceiling, while the luxurious chairs and fauteuils, fastened to the floor to prevent trouble in a heavy sea, were such as are only seen in the homes of the very rich.

The article that Bill Sharpe had referred to as a tomato-can was a gigantic silver vase—a trophy won by the yacht Siren when she showed her heels to half a dozen of the swiftest private vessels owned by American yachtsmen.

The vase was a magnificent specimen of the silversmith's skill. It was of solid silver, and independently of its value as a work of art, contained probably \$200 worth of the precious metal.

It was this vase that the two river thieves coveted, though they had another purpose in entering the yacht that was altogether unconnected with robbery.

Softly Jim Riggan crawled through the window and stood in the cabin.

He turned and looked out of the window to make sure that his companion was waiting below, so that he could drop into the boat in case of alarm.

Like a cat he stole across the room, seized the silver vase and carried it to the window.

"I've got it," he whispered to his companion in the boat.

"Well, throw it down, I'll catch it," returned Sharpe, holding out his hands.

"No, you don't, Mister Sharpe," muttered Jim. "I know yer, and I don't trust yer worth a cent. I'll keep the pot till I come down myself. I don't propose to be left if I can help it, not even to oblige you."

He stepped softly over to the young man and gazed intently into his face.

"Fast asleep! If he wakes while I'm fixin' this thing I'll have to slug him, an' I don't want to do that. He is a good-lookin' feller, and I'd hate to play a mean trick on him," whispered Jim. "Where the deuce is his coat?"

He looked carefully around the cabin and in the bunk.

"Ah, there it is—under his head. The next thing is to get to his pocket."

He cautiously tugged at the coat on which was pillowed the young man's head.

"Hello, there!" muttered the sleeper, without opening his eyes.

Jim Riggan had dropped on the floor to avoid observation.

"What shall I do? He'll wake, sure, if I pull the coat away, and how in thunder I'm to get at his pocket-book I don't know."

He arose to his feet and looked closely at the blue pea-jacket as it lay rolled up under the young man's head.

"By George! I believe I can fix it without moving it. There's his pocket with the pocket-book sticking out. I'm in luck, after all."

He put his fingers on the end of the Russia-leather pocket-book that was protruding from the pocket just by the young man's right ear.

To reach the pocket-book Riggan had to lean over the sleeper.

As he did so he drew from his own pocket a small handy billy—a murderous weapon that could kill a man at one blow!

Then he pulled at the pocket-book!

The young man who lay peacefully slumbering in the bunk, in supposed security, and with every muscle relaxed, was perhaps never so near death before:

Had he opened his eyes at that moment the terrible lead-loaded weapon in Jim Riggan's hand would have descended on his temple with crushing force.

It would have been life or death with Jim Riggan, and he knew it.

Fortunately, however the young man slept on while the other drew the pocket book out and looked at it.

"Got it! Now to find what I want in it! I ain't goin' to take the pocket-book along, and have this here business traced to me, if I knows myself!"

He deliberately opened the pocket-book and spread it out on the table under the light of the chandelier.

"Yes, here it is," he muttered, as he drew out a cabinet photograph and looked for an instant at the features of the young girl it portrayed. "What's this here on the back? Ah! 'From Clarice to Norman.' That's it. Well, Mister Norman, I'll take this picture as a part of the swag."

He put the photograph in an inner pocket of his sack coat, and then carefully overhauled the other contents of the pocket-book.

It was at this moment that an unsuspected observer appeared and watched Jim Riggan's proceedings.

"I'll help myself to this twenty. There don't seem to be any more here. The papers with writin' on 'em I don't want, but a good United States greenback is good enough for Jim Riggan, every time. I suppose I had better put the pocket-book back again."

He folded up the pocket-book and stepped over the sleeper, at which movement the observer crawled through the stern light window, where he had been watching.

He was a young man—a mere boy—clad in a tightly buttoned sack coat, while a slouch hat partly covered his blonde curls. His blue eyes glittered as he watched Jim Riggan, and he was evidently there for "business."

Jim carefully put the pocket-book back in the sleeper's pocket, and was turning away, when he accidentally tripped and fell forward on the sleeper's stomach.

"What the—!" cried the young man as he startled up; but, Jim Riggan's hand on his throat forced him back, and, with a savage snarl, the desperado raised his handy billy to silence the aroused young man.

But the boy with the keen blue eyes was there and grasping the upraised arm, with a sudden twist he threw the river pirate breathless and helpless, to the other end of the cabin.

"Who are you? I owe you my life, whoever you may be!" exclaimed the young man, springing from his bunk and grasping the hand of his preserver.

The boy took off his slouch hat, threw back his blonde curls with a careless sweep of the hand, and replied:

"I am a member of the Secret River Police of New York, and they call me 'Git Thar Owney.'"

CHAPTER II.

AN OLD FRIEND'S REAPPEARANCE.

WHILE Jim Riggan was trying to secure the silver vase and other things he wanted, in the cabin of the "Siren," Bill Sharpe sat in his yawl and tried to pierce the fog for possible danger.

As he had said, he thought once that he heard muffled oars in the vicinity.

"Who can be prowlin' around here at this time o' night, I wonder? Seems to me honest folks ought to be in bed, and give business men a chance to attend to their affairs without bein' bothered," he grumbled. "There's a young snoozer a-hangin' around the river that I don't like. He's a sight too fresh. They call him Git Thar Owney, and I—Hollo, what's that?"

Bill Sharpe lay flat in his boat and peered over the stern, with his eyes as near the level of the surface of the water as he could get them.

"If the fog 'u'd only lift a little I might be able ter see under it. I don't like this 'ere job, nohow. I never heard so many funny noises at night before."

He was hemmed in so closely by the fog that he could not discern anything beyond that portion of the yacht nearest to the boat.

He looked up.

The window of the stern of the yacht was open, but Jim Riggan was not there.

Yes, there he was!

The short conversation between the two men, referred to, here too place. Then Jim Riggan went away from the cabin window again, and his companion strained his ears in the attempt to satisfy himself that no one was near him who might interfere with his plans.

A slight creaking sound reached his ears, but, though Bill Sharpe strained his eyes, he could distinguish nothing but fog and the lights of the suspension bridge.

Another creak and the sound of oars!

Bill was painfully alert!

Yes, somebody was rowing close to him!

The oars were muffled; still there was a slight creaking that could not be mistaken.

The stranger, whoever he was, evidently knew the river pretty well, for he was rowing without hesitation.

Bill Sharpe looked up at the cabin window, but no Jim Riggan was there.

Bill thought a moment.

"Now, somebody's goin' to be snatched for this night's work. I don't propose to let it be me if I can help it. Bill Sharpe is a little too fly for that."

He hastily put his sculls in their rowlocks and pulled for the open river.

He had taken but a few strokes when the bow of his boat came in collision with another.

"Hallo, Bill Sharpe, I have you this time! Just what I expected!" said a voice, in his ear, as the occupant of the other boat—a long cutter-built skiff—jumped into the yawl and pushed him off his seat into the bottom of the boat, where he lay on his back, in two inches of bilge-water, as helpless as a trussed turkey.

Bill tried to get up, but he was so wedged in, with his head under one seat and his feet under another, that he could not move.

"What are yer doin', consarn you?" growled Bill Sharpe. "What right have you to serve a man this yer way? Yes, I see yer badge. I know you belong to the police, but I'll be cursed if you ain't exceedin' of yer duty. I'll call at the station-house of your precinct to-morrow, and see into this thing, Mr. Git Thar Owey."

The other had thrown open his sack coat so that the light of the bull's-eye lantern he carried would shine on his silver badge, and had then bent down to look into the face of his recumbent prisoner.

"You know my name, then?" he asked, with a quiet smile.

"You bet I do, ye young night spy!"

"Do you know why they call me Git Thar Owey, then?"

"Cause they say you always git thar, I guess; but—"

"That's it, exactly," interrupted Git Thar Owey.

"I do always 'git thar.' I've got there this time, Bill Sharpe; and now I want to know—what are you doing here?"

"I'm doin' my reg'lar business, that's all—watchin' for stuff from the sewers an' fishin' for anythin' that may happen to git into my grappels. You ought to know what I'm a-doin'." Bill Sharpe's business is purty well known along the river. I ain't ashamed of bein' an honest tradesman."

Git Thar Owey fastened his blue eyes on those of Bill Sharpe, as he asked:

"Where's your pal?"

"My pal?"

"Yes."

"What pal?"

"Don't try to fool me, now, Bill Sharpe! I've been watching you for over an hour. Where's Jim Riggan?"

"Let me sit up. I can't talk to you while I am lyin' down here."

Owey seized Bill Sharpe by the shoulder and dragged him into a sitting posture.

At the same moment, Bill made a dart forward and aimed a blow with his fist at the face of the detective.

"Ow!" he yelled, as he fell back before a straight-from-the-shoulder hit from the young athlete.

"Don't try that again, Billy! You need a little more science before you come for me. Do you want another?"

"Not much! I'll carry this yere black eye for a month. Blessed if I don't think you deserve to be called Git Thar Owey! You got to my blink that time," grumbled Bill, with the admiration men of his class always feel for athletic prowess.

"Now, where's Jim Riggan?" asked Owey.

Bill Sharpe was sitting up again, feeling his eye ruefully, as if to make sure it was all there.

"You want to know where Jim Riggan is, do you?"

"You needn't tell me. I know."

Owey glanced up at the window in the stern of the yacht, half-turning his head as he did so; at which Bill Sharpe made a sudden movement, as if to stand up and give warning to his pal.

A revolver, with Git Thar Owey's finger on the trigger, was thrust under his nose.

"Sit down, Billy! I'm running this business, just now. I don't want your help."

"Curse you! You shall have it, anyhow!" yelled Bill Sharpe, in an uncontrollable fit of rage, as, dashing Owey's pistol aside, he fell on his boyish foe and forced him to the bottom of the boat.

Git Thar Owey's revolver had gone overboard, and it was now a simple trial of strength between himself and the desperate man who had him by the throat.

"I'll show yer that Bill Sharpe can git thar too, even if he ain't got no science!" hissed Bill, as he tried to hold Owey's head back over the seat with one hand, while he felt in his pocket for his jack-knife with the other.

He had the boy at a terrible disadvantage.

Owey's throat was bare, and his head being held firmly back, the flesh was stretched tight and offered a fair mark for the murderer's knife.

The onslaught had been so sudden that Owey was unable to defend himself, but had gone down almost unresistingly before Bill Sharpe's rush.

"Curse this knife! I can't get it out!" hissed Bill Sharpe.

In the struggle to drag the knife from his pocket Bill Sharpe slightly relaxed his hold. That was enough. With a quick jerk of the head Owey released his throat, and then, turning wrapped his legs around those of Bill Sharpe in a "grape-vine twist," and threw him on his back.

But only for an instant; for he slipped from beneath Owey and lay on his side, with his arms tightly clasped around his antagonist's body.

The boat was rocking to and fro and shipping water by the pailful.

Bracing his feet against one of the seats, he put forth all his strength in an attempt to push Owey overboard.

Slowly but surely, the boy was being overcome.

Bill Sharpe had him in such a way that he could not do anything to save himself.

"Here's the last of Git Thar Owey!" chuckled

Bill Sharpe, as the boat tipped to one side and Owey was half over into the water; then with a sudden dive into his pocket he whipped out the knife.

Git Thar Owey saw the movement.

"What are you going to do with that knife?" he asked.

For answer Bill Sharpe gripped the blade of his knife with his teeth and opened it.

"Got anything to say 'fore I kill you?" he hissed. Owey did not reply.

"Got nothing to say, eh?" repeated Bill Sharpe, as he held the knife over Owey's throat. "Then, good-by; you'll git thar, Eli, this time! Ha, ha, ha!"

He chuckled at his ghastly joke, and then—

He dropped in a heap, under the blow of a gigantic fist from behind!

"Stretcher Bull!" exclaimed Owey, as he sprung up.

"That's me, by gosh, Owey! Saw you were in some kind of difficulty, an' thought I'd take a hand in. Good the fog has lifted a little, or I'd never have seen yer," said a broad-shouldered, good-natured-looking fellow, who stood over the now unconscious Bill Sharpe, while another boat—an outrigger—bobbed up and down against the hull of the Siren, by the side of the yawl and Git Thar Owey's cutter.

"What brings you on the river at this time of night, Stretcher?" asked Owey.

"Oh, I've been drinking, and I just thought I'd take a spin on the river in the fog for the good of my health."

Owey laughed, and then whispered:

"Stay here a minute, Stretcher. I've got business on hand!"

Springing into his own light craft, he pulled back to the yacht, leaped into the chains and clambered up to the window, where he met with the adventure already recorded.

Stretcher Bull stood looking down at Bill Sharpe, who was slowly coming to himself.

"You are a nice, square kind of fellow!" muttered Stretcher Bull—"with your knife! You weigh twice as much as that boy. Wouldn't I like to have you in a twenty-four-foot ring for about two minutes, with the bare knuckles! If I wouldn't do you up in such good shape that yer mother wouldn't know you from an earthquake, then my name ain't Stretcher Bull!"

CHAPTER III.

GIT THAR OWEY ACCEPTS A COMMISSION.

"WHAT was this blackguard after, I wonder," said the young man to Owey, when the latter had told his name and shown his badge in proof of his official position.

"That silver vase!" replied Git thar Owey, briefly.

"The scoundrel!"

"You should not have left your windows unprotected. The river swarms with sneak-thieves. Will you please tell me your name, so that I can report this affair at headquarters?"

"My name is Norman Reynolds. My father is Mr. Norman Reynolds, the New York merchant. This yacht is the 'Siren,' the property of my father. I am—"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Git Thar Owey, eagerly. "You are a Sophomore at Yale College, and are the captain of the college football club that is to have that match with the English team from Oxbridge University. I've heard of you, Mr. Reynolds. Let me shake hands with you again."

Young Reynolds, with a pleased smile, gave his hand willingly to Owey, who shook it more heartily than ever.

"Why," said the young collegian, "you said your name was Git Thar Owey. You must be the young fellow that rowed away from Stretcher Bull at Pittsburg some time ago, and won two other good races afterward. Shake again!"

So interested were the two young men in comparing notes, and in noting the good athletic "points" in each other's physique, that for the moment they paid no attention to Jim Riggan, who had been crouching against the wall on the floor near the window, where he had been thrown.

When he saw the twain so much occupied he concluded to take his own departure, unobserved.

So he softly crawled up to the window, passed through it and disappeared before Git Thar Owey and Norman Reynolds noticed his absence.

He dropped down into the chains and saw that something had happened.

Bill Sharpe was lying in the bottom of the yawl, some rods away, with another man, whose face he could not see, standing over him.

"I'd better get out of this as soon as possible," thought Jim Riggan. "Bill is caught, but I don't want any of it in mine."

Immediately under him, attached to the chains, was Owey's boat. Quickly he let himself down into this, seized the sculls, and before Stretcher Bull knew what had taken place, Jim Riggan was a hundred yards away, rowing down the river, beyond all danger of pursuit.

"Look out there, Stretcher. Catch him!" cried Owey, from the window above.

"Catch him!" repeated Stretcher Bull in a grumbling tone. "Catch him yerself. Darn his picture, he's half-way to the Battery by this time, and lost in the fog, in your boat, too."

"In my boat? But that don't make any difference. I ain't afraid of losing it. Somebody will see it and bring it back. It is too well known to be a safe thing for any one but me to keep; but, hold on to that other fellow, Stretcher!"

"You bet I'll hold on to him. Lay still you skunk!" added Stretcher Bull to Bill Sharpe, as the latter made a slight movement. The tide had now brought the yawl and Stretcher's own light craft close up under the stern lights of the yacht.

"Let me speak to you a moment before you go," said Norman Reynolds to Owey, as the detective advanced to say good-night.

"Certainly. What is it?"

"I know a great deal about you from hearsay, and I believe you are to be trusted."

Owey bowed and smiled.

"You know that I am the captain of the Yale College eleven that is to meet the Oxbridge team in the international football match on our college grounds next month."

"Yes."

"The Oxbridge boys are terrors, they say," went on Norman.

"Is that so?"

"Yes, they have beaten every eleven that ever met them in their own country, and now they are coming over here to annihilate us."

"Um! Yes! Their great grandfathers tried the annihilating business in America a hundred years ago, and we all know that they didn't annihilate as much as they expected they would," remarked Owey, with a smile.

"True, but this is a different thing. These fellows can play football, and they have the strength, and the activity and the nerve, and the pluck, and—"

"Hold on," interrupted Owey. "Tell me if English college students have ever shown more strength, activity, nerve and pluck than our own boys display every time there is a match of any kind on the quadrangle. You talk as if, because the Oxbridge team can handle themselves well, there is no chance for Yale. Mr. Reynolds, I'm surprised at you. I hope you will never let any of your team hear you talk in that way."

"I wouldn't," returned the young captain, quickly. "I say it to you because I want to show you that I have some misgivings as to the result of the match."

"Well?"

"I want to win, if possible."

"Of course; it would be strange if you didn't."

"And—I want your assistance."

"Mine?"

"Yes. I want you to help me coach the Yale team; and, moreover, I want you to train me as much as you can between now and the 14th of next month."

"The date of the match, eh?"

"Yes."

"You look to be in pretty fair condition now," observed Owey, looking critically at the young man.

"I think I am in pretty good condition," assented the collegian, stretching himself and throwing back his elbows, so as to expand his chest, "but I have been neglecting myself a little lately. I have been spending too much time aboard the Siren, I am afraid, but I am going to lay her up now, and go right to hard work, and get ready for the match."

"Good! That means business!"

"Will you undertake the job?"

"Yes, sir; with pleasure."

"Well, then, I must tell you everything that concerns the match, or my part in it, and what I have to say now concerns a lady."

"Indeed?" and the young detective was all attention.

"Yes. Listen! But first look out of that window and see what your friend is doing."

Git Thar Owey looked out of the window and saw that Stretcher Bull was sitting quietly in the yawl watching Bill Sharpe, who, lying in the bottom of the boat, had evidently hardly yet collected his scattered senses.

"He is all right. Stretcher Bull is one of my best friends. He is not troubled with the failing of impatience, either. He will wait."

"This young lady," said Norman Reynolds, taking up his narration, "lives in New Haven. She is the daughter of a wealthy merchant there. I met her two years ago for the first time. I have seen her since, and, in fact, we are engaged to be married. At least, not exactly engaged, because she will not consent to that except under one condition."

"And what is that?"

"Why, she says if we let the Englishmen beat us in this football match she will never marry me."

"She is joking about that, of course," said Owey.

"Not altogether. I am afraid. Of course I do not think she would allow the happiness of our two lives to depend upon the outcome of a football match, but I am confident that, if we lose, she will tease me and put off the formal engagement indefinitely. She is very patriotic, and, having lived within the shadow of the college walls from infancy, she has the honor of Yale so closely at heart, that our defeat would be a bitter disappointment to her."

"Then you will feel that you are striving for your sweetheart's favor as well as for Yale's honor, eh? That should make you play well."

"I will play as well as I can, you may rest assured—but that is not all. There is a young man in my team who has for a long time been annoying Clarice—that is the lady's name—with his attention. She has managed to shut him off at last, but he swears he will have her yet, and, moreover, that he will 'fix' me."

"Fix you?"

"Yes, that is the expression he used."

"What do you think he will do?"

"I don't know, but he is liable to do anything. He plays in my team."

"Why do you let him do that?"

"I cannot very well help it. He is a good player

—one of the best 'rushers' we have. For the good of the college I must make the team as strong as I can. I could hardly keep a man out for personal reasons. Besides, I should be ashamed to do it, anyhow. It would look as if I were afraid of him."

"Very true."

"I am only anxious that he shall not do anything crooked on the ball ground. He might possibly make us lose the match, if he could, just to spite me with Clarice."

"He isn't as bad as that, is he?" asked Owney.

"I don't know. Gilbert Dawson is a man whom I do not trust in anything."

"Gilbert Dawson. Is that his name?"

"Yes. It is necessary that you should learn all these things, but I need not say that I tell you in the strictest confidence."

"Mr. Reynolds!" said Owney somewhat hurt.

"Of course—of course! I beg your pardon," said Norman, hastily. "Well, when can you commence with me?"

The young man lighted a cigar as he spoke.

Git Thar Owney coolly took the cigar from his mouth and threw it out of the window into the river, as he replied:

"Now! Smoking is strictly prohibited."

"You are right. Tobacco weakens the heart, and is bad for the wind. I should have known better," assented Norman Reynolds.

"Go to bed!" ordered Owney, and stay there until ten o'clock to-morrow morning. At that time I will be with you, and talk further about our arrangements. You will train in New Haven, I suppose?"

"Certainly. The team is there and we must practice every day."

"Good-night," and Owney turned toward the window. "I will go the same way that I came."

Reynolds had been looking in his pocket-book.

"I meant to have given you a twenty toward current expenses," he said. "I thought I had one here, but I must have been mistaken. Hallo! What's this? By heavens! I've been robbed! That fellow stole something from me, after all."

"What did he take? How much?"

"A picture! The picture of Miss Clarice Le Fevre! What could he want with that? He must have had some motive. Own-y, I depend on you to get back that picture. Follow it wherever it goes, and remember, that, next to beating the Britishers, I want to get that picture more than anything else."

"Don't worry! I'll easily get it. I know Jim Riggan's haunts, and I'll bring you that picture when I come to see you at ten o'clock in the morning."

Owney climbed out of the window, and turned to see that young Reynolds obeyed his injunction and went to bed.

Then he looked down at the boat which held Stretcher Bull and Bill Sharpe.

"Bring her right underneath, Stretcher!" Owney called out.

"Ay, ay! Steady all!" was Stretcher's reply.

He seized a pair of sculls and rowed the clumsy yawl immediately below the chain on which Git Thar Owney was standing.

"Come on, Owney. Guess you can make it now, easy enough."

"All right!"

Owney stepped down from one chain to another, and was just about to jump into the boat, when there was a sudden commotion.

"Look out, Stretcher! He's going!" yelled Git Thar Owney.

"Who's going? Where?" cried Stretcher Bull, looking every way but the right one.

"Why, Bill Sharpe!"

Stretcher Bull, who had been giving all his attention to the guidance of the yawl, looked around just in time to receive a splash of water in the face that, for the moment, took away his breath.

He saw something dash past him and plunge into the river, the splash in his face being the result of the plunge.

The something was Bill Sharpe!

He had been waiting for a chance to get away, and was willing to take any risk rather than be taken to Police Headquarters.

Stretcher recovered himself in time to strike at Bill Sharpe's heels as he dived head-first over the side of the boat, but he was too late.

Bill Sharpe went down below the muddy waters like a stone. He was an excellent swimmer and could hold his breath under water for a minute without difficulty, and in a minute a good swimmer can move a considerable distance.

When Bill Sharpe came to the surface again, he was just passing around the bow of the Canadian schooner that lay next to the yacht, and before Git Thar Owney and Stretcher Bull knew in which direction he had gone, he had passed out of sight.

He swam leisurely to the dock, climbed up the slinky logs and stood on *terra firma*.

Then, shaking his fist in the direction of the "Siren," he hissed:

"All right, Git Thar Owney! I'll make you pay for this night's work; and you, too, Stretcher Bull. Bill Sharpe never forgets or forgives!"

He turned away in the darkness and was lost to view, as he made his way to a place down-town, where he knew he could procure dry clothes, his inward wrath being almost fiery enough to prevent his feeling any discomfort from the cold bath.

In the mean time, Git Thar Owney and Stretcher Bull were slowly rowing down the river in the yawl, with Owney's boat in tow.

"Stretcher, I want you to help me in a training job and another matter that I have on hand," said Owney.

"Owney, Stretcher Bull is your friend. What do you want me to do?"

"I'll tell you as we go along."

CHAPTER IV.

A NICE LITTLE SCHEME.

IN a dark street on the East Side, near the river, there is a dark house—dark in more ways than one.

Its bricks are shiny with a dirty, dark deposit such as always attaches itself to old buildings, and from the ragged edge of its parapet, where the bricks and mortar have for years been gradually crumbling away, down to the battered, bruised, hang-dog front door, level with the street, the whole edifice is dark, gloomy and wretched.

If all that is said about the house be true, the ways of its frequenters are often as dark as the building.

Very seldom are lights seen at the windows in the evening.

The mysterious people who come and go at all hours of the day and night either sit in the dark after nightfall, or carefully hide the reflection of their lamps and candles from the street with thick window-shades and impenetrable shutters.

It is a lodging-house and is occupied by members of that large class of New Yorkers who get a living from the streets.

Beggars, musicians, venders of every imaginable street merchandise, and men, women and children who occupy themselves in numberless ways during the day, from rag-picking to pocket-picking, seek a haven in this dark house when they have leisure for sleep or recreation.

The fog that had begun to lift a little from the river still lingered in the dark street in which was the dark house, as Jim Riggan stole cautiously toward it.

"Don't want to meet no cops this morning," he muttered. "They always want to know too much about what a feller's a-doin' and where he's a-goin'."

"Tain't none o' their business, but they will do it."

He looked cautiously up and down the street as he stood outside the hang-dog front door.

"Don't see no one comin'. Wonder who's in the joint to-night."

He looked up at all the windows above him, and then knelt down and listened at the grating that let in light to a basement window.

He listened intently.

Not a sound of life was visible below.

Everything in the basement was as dark as the windows above.

Jim Riggan knelt with his ear to the grating for nearly a minute.

Then he arose with a satisfied expression.

"I heard his voice. He's there, sure as my name's Jim Riggan."

He drew a key from his pocket, inserted it in a key-hole placed curiously about a foot from the bottom of the hang-dog front door, and turned it with a click.

Then he took out another key, and reaching above his head, found another key-hole about a foot from the top of the door.

Another click, and the hang-dog door was open.

"Don't see the use of them keys," muttered Jim Riggan, as he stood in the dark hall and closed the door again. "They wouldn't keep the cops out a minute if they wanted to come in, and them key-holes is awful hard for a feller to find when he's been a-dinin' at Del's and had too much champagne."

He chuckled to himself at the conceit, as he groped his way toward the end of the hall.

It was pitch dark.

A stifled oath burst from Jim Riggan's lips as he came in collision with the heavy old fashioned newel-post at the foot of the stairs leading to the upper part of the house.

"Deuce take it! Thought I knew this house pretty well, an' here I am a-bagin' an' a-hammerin' myself ag'in' everything."

He felt his way past the bannisters and along a rear hall.

At the end he found a flight of stairs, protected by a door on his right.

The door was only fastened with an ordinary latch, and he opened it by simply turning the handle.

Jim Riggan cautiously descended the stairs, which were old, worm-eaten and splintered.

They creaked loudly at every step.

"Creak away, my beauties! You're the best watch-dog we could have."

There had been a muffled sound of voices, as of persons talking at a distance, when Jim Riggan began to walk down the stairs, but it had ceased at the very first creak.

Watchful ears were evidently in the vicinity.

At the foot of the stairs Jim Riggan paused a moment; then he strode confidently forward until he reached a door he could not see, but one he evidently knew was there.

There was no handle or fastening of any kind on the outside, but Jim drew a match from his pocket and ignited it with a loud scratch on the door, blowing it out immediately afterward.

He listened, and in a few seconds heard the sound of another match scratching on the inside.

He responded by tapping twice softly, when a ray of light shot from a small hole in the door, into which Jim could hardly have thrust his little finger, and a voice whispered:

"What?"

"Owls!" returned Jim Riggan.

"What kind?"

"Horned owls."

"Ticket?"

Jim took a pencil from his vest-pocket and thrust it through the hole.

There was just enough room for him to move it slightly.

A piece of white cardboard met the point inside the door, and Riggan guided the pencil so as to

make a rude circle with a cross on the piece of cardboard.

"Enter, Owl!" said the voice, as the door was opened just wide enough to admit him.

Though the room was only illuminated by two poorly-burning coal-oil lamps, the light was at first too strong for Jim's eyes, after he had been so long in the dark hallways.

He stood blinking for a minute or two like the bird with which he claimed affinity.

Indeed, Jim Riggan was not unlike an owl at all times.

Though there was so much formality attending the entrance of every one to this basement kitchen, it ceased as soon as the interior was gained.

At least a dozen persons were in the room, and all seemed to be following their own devices. Tobacco-smoke floated in thick clouds throughout the apartment, and there was a hubbub of voices from the different groups of smokers.

A kitchen stove, with a roaring fire, made the room very hot.

The occupants were nearly all in appearance of the same class as Jim Riggan; the indescribable "water-rat" characteristics were to be noted on all of them—except one.

This one was a young man who sat in a distant corner in close conversation with a grizzled, wrinkle man of perhaps sixty—a man whose hard life had evidently done more toward aging him than the years that pass so lightly over some heads.

The young fellow was of altogether different clay to his companions. His clothing, while of a careless description, was of good material and well made, and the soft hat that he wore would have looked respectable had it not been purposely bent out of shape.

He was very dark, and his black eyes glittered suspiciously as he looked furtively around him.

"Hallo, Jim!" cried the elder man, as Riggan squeezed through the doorway.

"Hallo, yerself, Uncle Dave!" returned Jim.

"What have yer got ter drink?"

Uncle Dave, for answer, pushed over a bottle and glass toward Riggan.

"That's good, Uncle!" assented Jim, as he helped himself to a glass of the liquor. "Nothing like real old Bourbon when a fellow's been fishin', eh?"

"Been fishing, Jim?"

"Kinder!"

"What have you caught?"

Riggan looked carelessly into the glittering eyes of the young man, who had bent forward over the little table at which the three were now seated.

"Did you catch—?" commenced the young man.

"Catch what, Mr. Gilbert Dawson?" said Jim Riggan.

"Hush! Don't make so free with my name here," whispered the young man, looking fearfully around him.

"Oh, all right, I won't give nothin' away; don't you fear, I have been fishin', as I told yer, an' I caught somethin' though it warn't all I was after."

"Did you get the picture?" eagerly asked Gilbert Dawson, his hands opening and shutting nervously.

"Why don't you answer, Jim? What's the use of bothering the gentlemen this way?" put in Uncle Dave.

Jim Riggan slowly poured out another glass of liquor, threw it down his throat and then drew from his pocket the photograph he had taken from Norman Reynolds in the cabin of the "Siren."

The young man sprung up and tried to snatch the picture.

"Hold on, sir! That ain't in the bargain, 'zactly. This here's a C. O. D. transaction," said Jim Riggan, drawing the picture away, while he put out his left hand to stop the other from coming too close.

"Well, here is your money," said Gilbert Dawson, drawing a roll of notes from his pocket, and counting them on the table. "Twenty, forty, fifty—fifty dollars. Here you are."

Jim Riggan took the fifty dollars in his hands and brushed his nose backward and forwards, with them, two or three times, while evidently reflecting.

"Well, there is your money. It is all right, is it not? Now, give me the picture," said Gilbert Dawson eagerly.

"Yes, give him his picture. He's acted square and upright with you. Give him what he's paid for," said Uncle Dave.

"I dunno about that," observed Jim Riggan, slowly. "Seems to me that picture is worth more than a fifty. I've had a great deal o' trouble gettin' it, and came mighty near bein' pulled in. In fact, I ain't safe yet. That picture's worth a hundred, Mr. Gilbert Dawson."

The young man jumped up, and rushing at Jim Riggan, pushed him over, chair and all.

"Order! Order! Order!" sounded from all parts of the room.

Three or four stalwart fellows pulled Gilbert Dawson off the prostrate Jim Riggan, and assisted the latter to his feet.

A tall man walked over to the table and looking sternly at Jim Riggan, said:

"Another break like that, and you are fined five dollars. You know the rules of the Hoot Owl Society."

"It was my fault, captain," interposed Gilbert Dawson, "and I beg your pardon, as well as his. I will not offend again. Here's my hand, Riggan."

Jim Riggan shook hands rather sulkily, and the captain walked away.

"Now, Jim, give him the picture," said Uncle Dave.

Jim Riggan put the fifty dollars in his pocket and handed the picture of Clarice Le Fevre to Gilbert Dawson.

The young man looked for an instant at the

features of the young girl, and then, with a muttered expression of triumph, put the photograph in an inside pocket of his vest.

"Now, Uncle Dave," said the young man, leaning confidently over the table, "about this other matter. You know what I want, and it is for you to help me devise a plan. No one must suspect me, you understand."

"Of course—of course."

"I feel sure it can be done. It is of vital importance to me that Yale shall lose this match, and as I am one of the principal 'rushers' we ought to be able to throw the game without much difficulty."

"Certain."

"Now, what do you propose?"

"You say you are one of the principal rushers?"

"Yes."

"A slip on your part at a certain part of the game would give the goal to the Oxbridge!"

"Yes."

"Then why couldn't you make a mistake?"

"Wouldn't do. That fellow, Norman Reynolds, half-suspects me already. I must get some one else to do it."

"Any one you can buy?"

"No."

"Um! That's bad. Jim Riggan, what do you think about it?" asked Uncle Dave.

Jim Riggan had been quietly listening to the conversation, without making any remark, but now, when his opinion was asked, he said, confidently:

"Fix the feller what I got that there picter from. That's the only thing to do."

"Who'll fix him?" asked Uncle Dave.

"Give me the job and pay me decent, and I'll take care he makes a bad break in the match," returned Jim Riggan.

"How much do you want?"

"Five hundred."

"I'll want a hundred for getting you the job, Jim," said Uncle Dave.

"Then I must have six."

Gilbert Dawson reflected a moment. Then, putting out his hand and taking that of Riggan, he shook it, and said energetically:

"Done!"

"All right, just leave this thing to me, and if Yale doesn't get badly laid out by them English fellers may I never drink nothin' but water for the rest of my life!"

During the foregoing conversation the door of the kitchen had opened and shut several times.

Several of those who had been sitting talking and drinking had disappeared, while others had come in.

The Hoot Owl Society evidently numbered among its members a large number of New York's population.

While river men preponderated, it was evident that people in other lines of business were admitted to the inner sacred circle of Hoot Owldom.

In no other way could the presence of a gentleman in an old plug hat and a seedy suit of clothes that had once been genteel, be accounted for.

The seedy gentleman had come in a few minutes before and had dropped into a chair just behind Jim Riggan.

The seedy gentleman's nose was very red, and his red hair was disheveled, and he was evidently very much intoxicated.

He put one of his feet on a rail of Jim Riggan's chair, and his head kept on dropping forward, as if the muscles of his neck were very, very tired.

"Whasher matters?" he mumbled, when Jim Riggan turned hastily around. "Whasher matters? Whasher lookin' that way at brother Owlsh?"

"Drunken fool!" said Riggan to himself, as he turned away.

"Well, gentlemen, then I'll leave it to you," said Gilbert Dawson rising. "I have a good deal of business to attend to in the next few days. Can you come to my rooms in New Haven this day week?"

"Yes. I'll be there," said Jim Riggan.

"Very well. Good-night."

"Hol' onsh. Guesh I'll go too," said the drunken man in the seedy clothes, squeezing through the door after Gilbert Dawson.

"Let the fool get through," said Dawson to the doorkeeper, as he groped his way up the stairs.

"Fool, eh?" said the seedy man, as he followed slowly.

"Well, we'll see, Mr. Gilbert Dawson. I know your plan now, and if I don't make it pleasant for you, my name ain't Git Thar Owney!"

CHAPTER V.

AN EXCITING ADVENTURE.

It was a beautiful afternoon on the day after the making of the compact in the Hoot Owls' kitchen that Gilbert Dawson walked blithely along one of the busy streets of New Haven, Connecticut.

He was dressed in the extreme of fashion, and his face was as bright as his immaculate silk hat or the small diamond that glittered in his tasty scarf.

He was evidently satisfied with himself and the world at large, and the nods and bows that he distributed to his many acquaintances as he passed along were much more cordially given than was his wont, and were duly commented on by his classmates and the men in college who were more or less intimate with him.

"Gilbert Dawson must have struck it rich somewhere," remarked one young student to another, as standing on the steps of the post office, Dawson passed toward the Park.

"Draw, I guess," observed the other.

"Does he play much now?"

"Yes, he's a plunger, and you can always tell when he's pulled off a jackpot by the cut of his jib."

"That's so. He's a cool one. Always mysterious, too, eh?"

"Very."

The two young men dropped the discussion of Gilbert Dawson's peculiarities to talk about the approaching football match between Yale and Oxbridge, and, as they sauntered along, fully settled it in their own minds that, though the Britishers might be terrors, old Yale would prove more than their match.

Meanwhile Gilbert Dawson strolled on until he reached the private house standing back in its own lawn on one of the residence thoroughfares.

A number of the fine old elms for which New Haven is noted shaded the front of the comfortable-looking mansion, with its battlemented stone parapets and big bay windows, while the scent of late flowers clung lovingly around the vine-covered porch.

A pretty place and a fitting casket for the jewel it contained.

So thought Gilbert Dawson, as, pushing open one of the heavy iron gates, he walked up the carriage drive to the door under the porch.

As he did so a carriage drawn by two spirited ponies was brought round by a groom from the stables at the back.

"Miss Le Fevre at home?" asked Gilbert Dawson, of the unmistakably Irish dame who came to the door in answer to his rattle.

"Yis, sorr; she bees in, but Oi'll not be a-tellin, yez how long before she'll be out," said the girl, taking Gilbert's card and ushering him into the parlor.

The young man sat down and waited as patiently as might be for the appearance of Clarice Le Fevre.

He felt that he was trying to steal a march on his rival, Norman Reynolds, in which he could hardly expect any assistance from the girl.

"Never mind," he reflected. "Faint heart ne'er won fair lady, and all is fair in love and war."

In spite of himself, however, his heart thumped furiously as he heard the rustling of a dress outside the door.

He tried hard to compose himself, but there was a slight tremble in his voice as he apologized for his intrusion to the beautiful girl who stood before him in the doorway.

"I presume you are going out, Miss Le Fevre, and I will not detain you now."

Clarice Le Fevre's voice was hard and cold, and her pretty lips were firmly set, as she replied:

"I am only going for a drive, Mr. Dawson. I can spare time to listen to you if you have anything to say. Be seated."

She motioned him to the chair from which he had arisen on her entrance, but did not sit down herself. Gilbert Dawson remained standing.

"I have something to say to you, Miss Le Fevre."

"Well?"

"I suppose you are rather surprised that I should have called upon you after your unequivocal refusal of my suit the last time I saw you?"

"I am, I confess; but go on."

"Miss Le Fevre—Clarice!"

"Mr. Dawson, you forget yourself," said Clarice, drawing herself up.

"I beg pardon. I did forget myself," returned Gilbert Dawson, humbly. "The last time I was in this room, you told me that I could never hope for that which I would give my life to obtain—your love."

Clarice bowed her head.

"Mr. Dawson, I told you the simple truth."

"Precisely; for that I thank you. But, you did not tell me why my case was so hopeless. That I have a rival, I found out for myself."

Clarice's eyes flashed with indignation as she said:

"Mr. Dawson, I do not recognize your right to make such a remark. Good-afternoon!"

She turned to leave the room, but Gilbert Dawson stepped before the doorway.

Clarice bit her lip, as she said, scornfully:

"If you make me a prisoner in my father's parlor, I suppose I must submit, but do not forget that I have assistance within call."

Gilbert Dawson started as if stung.

The shot was a severe one, and it told.

"Miss Le Fevre, you talk as if I were a desperado. I only wanted you to listen a moment longer."

"I am listening."

"My rival! Do you know that he is worthy of you? Do you think that he is a man deserving of your respect and love? Do you—"

Clarice again stepped toward the door.

"Let me pass," she said. "I will not listen to these disagreeable innuendoes any longer."

"The innuendoes can soon be explained. Do you know that this Norman Reynolds boasts to his friends and acquaintances that he is engaged to the prettiest girl in New Haven? That he even—"

Clarice rushed past him, and gaining the porch, told the groom to bring the carriage to the steps.

Without looking toward the bow-window where she knew Gilbert Dawson was watching her, she took the reins in her hands and drove away.

"An' be the powers, there's something vexin' her, as shure as me name's Bridget Maloney," remarked the Irish maid, as she watched the phaeton out of sight, and saw how firmly Miss Le Fevre kept her ponies in hand.

Gilbert Dawson stood in the parlor looking out of the bay-window, with a cynical smile on his lip.

"Didn't wait for me to spring my other weapon on her, eh? All right, Clarice Le Fevre, I'll win you yet. I've got this picture, and if I know your pride, as I think I do, you will give Norman Reynolds his conge very suddenly, if you can be made to believe that he has made your photograph common prop-

erty. She's prettier than ever when she is mad. I should enjoy nothing so much as breaking that spirit, and if I ever get her for a wife, I'll do it, as sure as my name is Gilbert Dawson!"

"Wonder what he's a-mutterin' about in there, bad 'cess to him," said Bridget Maloney, glancing in the doorway of the parlor as she passed. "I hope Miss Clarice won't have nothin' to do wid yez, so I do," she added, shaking her fist surreptitiously at Gilbert Dawson.

He turned around at this moment, and, still with the cynical smile on his countenance, strode out of the house, and walked slowly in the direction taken by Clarice with her pony-phaeton.

Clarice was in a tremor of indignation as she gave her two spirited ponies a cut with the whip and sent them spinning along the well-paved street.

"The cowardly wretch!" she was saying. "How I do despise a man who tries to slander another to a woman, when he dare not face his victim openly!"

She urged on her ponies and gave them another lash in the excitement of her feelings.

"What did he mean by telling me that Norman was undeserving of my respect? But, there, why should I trouble myself about his meaning? He is a coward, and I am only sorry that he is a Yale man, and still more sorry that he plays in the match with Norman's eleven."

The ponies were going along at a rattling pace, and Clarice, who, though thoroughly feminine, was yet a splendid driver, found all her strength and skill taxed to hold them in.

"Not so fast, Daisy! Gently, Pansy!" she said to her two equine favorites. "We have plenty of time. I am afraid you have had too little exercise lately."

The ponies tossed their heads and took a fresh spurt.

"What! You want to try conclusions with your mistress, do you?" said Clarice, as she twisted the reins around her slight, but by no means weak, gloved hands.

Again the ponies leaped forward!

"Very well, my pets! Go on! I think I know how to reduce you to obedience," said Clarice, as she turned them sharply around a corner and gave them a straight, level stretch of road.

The ponies appreciated the chance to try their speed, and lay down to their work with every apparent intention of doing a fast mile or so, whether the lady behind them desired it or not.

"We'll see whether you will do that when you get to Fairview. I think that hill will take the ambition out of you," she said to herself.

In the distance the tremendous rock, several hundred feet high, with a winding carriage-road from base to summit, and known as Fairview Park, arose to view.

The road is necessarily steep, and there are few horses that could go the whole distance at ever so slow a trot.

Clarice intended driving her ponies up that road.

She felt as if she needed air.

The interview with Gilbert Dawson had left her with a stifled feeling in her throat, and the best remedy would be the breeze that always plays around the crest of the great rock in Fairview Park.

The ponies kept up their fast pace and rattled briskly over a little wooden bridge a short distance from the commencement of the winding road.

The ponies were now thoroughly warmed to their work, and were tossing the white foam all over their necks and harness.

Clarice carefully guided them into the road through the Park, and they began their upward journey spiritedly.

For the first few hundred yards their pace did not sensibly diminish.

Then they gradually slowed down to an easy canter, and at last to a walk.

"I thought so," said Clarice, with a smile; "this hill is a little too much for you."

She looked with a slight shudder to the valley below, and thought how easy it would be for a horse to dash through the fence that protected the precipice and drag the occupants of the vehicle behind him to a fearful death on the jagged rocks at the base of the mountain.

The road wound round the face of the cliffs, with sometimes a row of thickly planted trees along the edge, but more often only a slightly built rail-fence.

The road was not one on which fantastic tricks of horsemanship would be advisable.

When the ponies finally brought the phaeton to the top, Clarice sat for several minutes admiring the splendid panorama spread at her feet.

The Sound, in the distance, looked as placid as a sheet of glass, while the spires and turrets of "Old Yale" and other familiar landmarks caught her eye one by one.

"I should like to stay up here all day," she thought as she watched the red glint of the dying sun on the waters of the bay. "It is beautiful! However, I suppose we had better return. Now Daisy, Pansy, you must behave yourselves going back—I let you do almost as you liked coming up here."

She stepped out of the carriage and walked to her horses' heads to pat them and whisper encouragingly.

The ponies knew and were fond of her, but seemed too eager to be off again to pay as much attention to her caresses as usual.

She looked all around them and examined the harness on each preparatory to going down the hill.

Everything was properly arranged, and resuming her place in the phaeton, she turned the heads of her ponies toward the road which led down to the valley.

She drove a little more cautiously than before.

She knew that a runaway now might mean a much more serious thing than when she had the steep climb to keep her ponies within bounds.

"You are doing very well," she remarked approvingly, as having got nearly half-way down the mountain, the ponies seemed disposed to submit to her guidance.

She kept them at a gentle trot, and was not thinking of anything but the enjoyment of her drive, when, swinging around a sharp corner where a jutting rock had partly hidden the road before her, she saw, walking leisurely toward her, Gilbert Dawson.

Clarice bit her lip with vexation.

Then she quickly made up her mind that she would not notice him, but would drive past him as fast as possible.

She flicked the ponies with her whip, and they darted forward.

She saw that Gilbert Dawson was regarding her with a cynical smile, as if he pitied her confusion, and the idea made her boil with indignation.

Again she touched the horses smartly with her whip, and again they darted along, pulling the reins from her hands.

She quickly recovered herself and tried to hold them in.

Too late!

The ponies had got the bits in their teeth and were dashing madly down the winding road!

The phaeton swung from side to side—now in danger of dashing against the rocks; anon nearly breaking through the rail fence that alone prevented her from falling to a frightful death a hundred feet below the precipice.

Still she clung to the reins and managed to keep the maddened ponies somewhere near the middle of the road.

The many sharp turns as the road wound toward the bottom made a watchful eye and a ready hand imminently necessary if she meant to escape death.

She pulled at the reins with all her might, and a tingling sensation, as if her blood were full of splinters of broken glass, passed up and down her overstrained arm!

"Stop, Pansy! Gently, Daisy!" she cried, breathlessly, but she might as well have shouted to the wind.

The ponies had the upper hand, and they knew it! How terribly the carriage swung!

What would be the end of this terrible ride?

She looked over the side of the precipice and trembled!

Clarice was a brave girl, but her situation was one to appall the stoutest heart—whether male or female.

The ponies were utterly beyond her control.

What did she hear?

Another vehicle coming up!

It was a buggy containing two young men!

They saw and understood the situation in a minute!

Even as her ponies swerved, one of them sprung from his seat in the buggy and jumped at their heads.

She uttered a prayer of thankfulness, and had just time to recognize in the young man coming to her rescue, her lover, Norman Reynolds, when his foot slipped, and his hold relaxing from the bridle of Pansy, whose head he had seized, he fell on the ground amid a cloud of dust, hoofs and flying wheels!

A shriek of horror burst from her!

Then—she never knew how it happened—a strong arm took her around the waist and lifted her from her seat, just as the carriage, with a loud crash, was broken to splinters against the rocky wall!

She was safe!

Norman Reynolds was standing in the road, covered with dust, and partly daed.

"Clarice," he said, "you are not hurt?"

"No, and you?"

"Oh, I am all right—a little shaken. But we both owe our lives to—"

"Call me Git Thar Owney," broke in the young fellow, with light curly hair, as he turned away from his own horse, whose neck he was stroking, while he coaxed it into quietude.

"Well, then, thank you," said the young girl. "Clarice Le Fevre will never forget that she is indebted for her life to Git Thar Owney."

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE DISGUISE WAS MADE.

WHEN Bill Sharpe walked down-town in his wet clothes his destination was the dark home in the dark street where Gilbert Dawson's compact with Jim Riggan was overheard by Git Thar Owney.

"I s'pose Jim will be going down to the Owls' Nest," he thought, "though I dunno as it's the safest place in New York for us at the present time. Them botherin' police seems to drop on our cribs so mysterious and so certain every time that there don't seem to be no peace nowhere."

Bill Sharpe had a wholesome dread of the police, and he was modest enough to desire to keep out of their way as much as possible.

The Owls' Nest, as the rendezvous of the Hoot Owls was called, was not altogether unknown to the police, and was regarded by them with considerable suspicion.

Somehow they had never yet been able to make an arrest in the house.

Suspicious characters had been traced to within half a block of the house, but no one could positively swear that they had entered.

Occasionally the police had insisted on searching the premises, but they never found anything to pay them for their trouble.

The men they expected to find had always managed to get away, and if the house afforded them a temporary hiding place, no one seemed to be aware of the fact.

Bill Sharpe knew all this, and was perhaps as well acquainted with the secret means of exit from the Owls' Nest as any one, but he still felt an unaccountable timidity about going in to-night.

"I'll just kind o' nose around there for a while afore I go in," he said to himself. "I've had trouble enough for one night, without bein' too promiscuous around the Nest."

He walked briskly on until he reached the dark street, and stopped a few doors from the dark house.

"Now, shall I go in or not? If I thought I'd find Jim in there, and that everything was all right I'd go in directly, if only to get my togs dry."

He suddenly stooped and crouched behind a flight of stone steps.

He had heard footsteps in the distance coming down the street.

In the feeble glimmer of a lamp he saw that one of the men wore a plug hat.

"A swell!" he muttered. "Wonder what he wants?"

To his surprise the man with the plug hat turned into the Owls' Nest.

"Hallo! What's in the wind?" said Bill Sharpe to himself. "Don't often see fellers with hats like that goin' into the Owls' Nest. Somethin' goin' on sure. I must foller that party, and get onto his game."

He was about to stand up and move toward the Owls' Nest when he saw that the companion of the man with the plug hat was still standing in the street outside the house.

"Well, I'm blessed! Who's his jiglets, with the soft dicer? Wish I could get a squint at his face!"

The man he called "his jiglets" lounged against the wall in a careless fashion, as if there were nothing unusual in his standing in a dark street at two o'clock on a foggy morning.

Was he waiting for his friend in the plug hat to come out again?

Bill Sharpe could not tell, but would have given a good deal to know.

Ha! The man was going into the Nest!

Bill Sharpe stood up and cautiously stepped on tiptoe toward the Nest.

The man with the plug hat and his friend had evidently the secret of ingress, for they had not hesitated at the front door.

Bill took two keys from his pocket and soon stood in the hallway of the Owls' Nest, in pitch darkness.

An indefinable sensation of danger pervaded him.

He felt convinced that the authorities were making another effort to secure definite evidence against the frequenters of the Owls' Nest, and he could not tell who might be the particular offenders for whom they were looking.

He only hoped that it might not be himself.

Cautiously he groped his way along the hallway in the dark.

Suddenly a hand seized him by the throat, and a voice whispered in his ear:

"Say a word and I'll choke you to death!"

Bill Sharpe struggled slightly, and then, realizing that he was helpless in the grasp of his unseen foe, stood still.

"Come out of here," commanded the voice.

"All right," gurgled Ugly Bill.

He was dragged unresistingly into the street and to the gas lamp.

The light fell on the features of both men, and they recognized each other simultaneously.

"Bill Sharpe!"

"Stretcher Bull."

"Yes, Stretcher Bull. Now, what were you doing in there?"

"What business is that o' yours? I'm acquainted in that house!"

"You are? Who lives there?"

"Most everybody," returned Ugly Bill. "Who do you want to find? If you will tell me who you were lookin' for in there p'raps I can tell you the number of his room."

Stretcher Bull, who had released his hold of Bill Sharpe's throat, stood looking at him with a puzzled expression.

"Darn me if I know who I want to see, an' what Owney wants in there," he mused, unconsciously thinking aloud. "He bounced in there, an' I went after him, but darn my whiskers if I know what it's all about."

"Well, you handle a man pretty rough, when you don't know what for, it 'pears to me," observed Bill.

"If you are through with me, I guess I'll go in and go to bed."

Stretcher Bull was in a quandary.

Here was this man, Bill Sharpe, whom Git Thar Owney had been tussling with, and whom he had handed over to him (Stretcher) with an injunction to take care of him.

Now, here the man had fallen into his hands again, but he could not hold him all night without some plausible excuse.

What should he do?

Bill Sharpe settled the matter for him.

With a quick movement, he tripped Stretcher Bull and darted at full speed down the street.

Stretcher Bull was an athlete, and was not easily disconcerted by any physical surprise.

In falling, even, he kept his presence of mind so as to drop easily.

Hardly had Ugly Bill got into a good stride as he sped down the street, when Stretcher was on his feet and running after him.

Stretcher Bull had cut out the pace for some good men in many a 500-yards' race.

He was an able sprinter, and knew exactly what distance he could cover in a given time.

This knowledge is called by sprinters "running on a watch," and is an important part of the education of professional pedestrians.

As soon as Stretcher Bull commenced the pursuit of Bill Sharpe, he knew that he could catch the latter in less than two blocks, unless Bill Sharpe had a reserve of speed that did not appear at present.

Stretcher Bull put on a spurt to test this question.

Bill Sharpe tried to respond to the spurt, but could only quicken his pace to a very slight degree.

"Just what I thought," chuckled Stretcher.

"You are going your very best."

He kept up his present speed, which was considerably greater than that of Bill Sharpe, and then, putting forth all his powers, rapidly overhauled him.

"He's goin' to catch me," muttered Bill Sharpe.

"What shall I do?"

Like a revelation a thought struck him.

He had just noticed a policeman on the opposite corner, who, hearing the footsteps of people running, was coming toward them, on the run himself.

"Here! What's this?" cried the policeman, stepping immediately in front of Bill Sharpe.

"Stop him!" yelled Stretcher Bull.

"Yes, I'll stop him," replied the policeman. "I'll stop both on yer!"

Ugly Bill ducked, and running against the policeman's legs, knocked that dignitary off his feet.

Stretcher Bull, coming along at full speed, did the most natural thing possible and fell over him, sprawling at full length on the ground, but, in an instant Stretcher was up and off again. His blood was up, and he was determined that Ugly Bill should not escape him, even if he had to chase him the whole length of New York.

Sharpe had not stopped to see how the policeman and Stretcher had been getting along.

He would resort to stratagem if needs were, but he would rather trust to his feet if they were sufficient to relieve him of his difficulty.

"Come back here, Billy," yelled Stretcher. "You may as well, because I'm going to have you."

"All right. Catch me, then!" was the taunting reply.

"I will," muttered Bull.

There was a third person in the chase, now.

The policeman, whose dignity had been sadly outraged, was galloping along after both men.

He did not care very much which one he caught, but he had made up his august mind to capture some one in return for the way he had been thrown around the sidewalk.

"Shtop, yer spalpeens!" yelled the officer, "or I'll shot yez!"

He pulled his revolver and leveled it at Stretcher, he being the nearest.

"D'ye hear phwat I say to yez?" the policeman shouted. "Be jabers! an' I'll pull the thrigger in another moment if yer don't shtop."

Sharpe did not think the officer would shoot him while he had a better shot at Stretcher Bull, and, in any case, he was determined not to wait and see; so he kept on running.

Stretcher was too much worked up in the excitement of the chase to heed what the policeman said; so he also kept a-running. "Shtop! I won't tell yez ag'in!" came from the now furious policeman.

There was no sign of obedience on the part of either of the men he was pursuing.

Bang!

A bullet whizzed past Stretcher Bull's right ear so close that it actually seemed to scorch; at which Stretcher involuntarily put his hand up to his ear and slackened his pace.

"Ah, bedad, an' I thought that 'ud make you shtop, yer shpalpeen!" said the policeman.

He jumped forward and was just about to place his hand on Stretcher's shoulder when the latter suddenly stopped short.

The policeman came in collision with his back with such force as to knock most of the breath out of his own body.

"Whewsh!" he sputtered. "I belave ye've kilt me entiorely!" he wailed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Ugly Bill, derisively, as he turned a corner.

"Now, I've got yez," cried the blue-coat. "I'll have the other feller, too, before long. Get into these bracelets."

He tried to force a pair of handcuffs on Stretcher Bull.

"Wait a minute! What's yer charge against me?" asked Stretcher. "I think you are making a mistake. The feller that just skeddaddled around that corner is the man you want. Couldn't you see that?"

"Naw, I couldn't! Don't give me none of yer guff. Put yer hands in yer', or I'll bat yez wid me locust."

Stretcher Bull was about to make further remonstrance when, to his astonishment, Bill Sharpe came running around the corner as fast as he had just before gone the other way.

"See, there he is!" exclaimed Stretcher. "There's yer man!"

"Don't think so, or he wouldn't be coming back again," observed the officer.

"Policeman, I ask the protection of the law," commenced Bill Sharpe. "This man tried to rob me, and—"

"Oh, you Kansas liar!" ejaculated Stretcher, preparing to "go for" the ugly man.

"And now there's another man, just around the corner, who attacked me a minute ago. I am an honest fisherman from up the river. I don't know nothin' about the ways of New York, and—"

"I'll smash you in the mouth if yer don't quit."

your lying," cried Stretcher Bull, with a threatening movement.

"Never moind," interposed the policeman. "O'il do the shmashin' if there is any. I belave O'il take ye both in, for suspicious characters."

"There's the other man," declared Sharpe, as a seedy man, in an old plug hat, came slowly around the corner. "He attacked me just now."

"Come along, both ov yez. O' belave yez are both loiar, and O'il take yez both in. If I had another hand, bedad, O'd arrest the ither wan, too."

The seedy man walked up to the policeman, and looking him full in the eyes, whispered in his ear. The officer started back in astonishment.

"Phwat's that yer soy?"

The seedy man threw open his threadbare coat.

"Well, be jabers, who'd ha' thought it?"

"Take this man along," ordered the seedy man, touching Bill on the shoulder.

"O' will, sur."

In a twinkling Bill Sharpe was handcuffed and being led away, in spite of his loud protestations that he had been robbed and was the victim of a conspiracy.

Stretcher Bull stood looking at the seedy man with his mouth wide open with surprise.

"Who the deuce are you?" he asked.

The seedy man pulled off his high hat, flattened it at one movement, snatched off his wig, and with the aid of certain strings inside pulled his long coat up until it was of a regular sack shape. Then he produced a slouch hat from an inside pocket, where it had reposed, all doubled up, and put it on.

"Don't you know me, Stretcher?"

"Git Thar Owney, by the ghost of the great dead Caesar!" gasped Stretcher Bull.

CHAPTER VII.

REYNOLDS IN BAD HANDS.

CLARICE LE FEVRE sat by herself in the parlor of her father's house in the evening of the day in which Norman Reynolds and Git Thar Owney had saved her from a frightful death.

She was thinking with gratitude of the stranger who had sprung to her lover's assistance when the ponies dashed him to the ground.

Then her thoughts reverted to the mysterious hints concerning Norman Reynolds which Gilbert Dawson had thrown out in the afternoon.

What did he mean?

She did not for a moment doubt her lover, but still she would like to know what was the nature of the reflections cast upon him by his enemy.

For, that Gilbert Dawson was his enemy she had had indubitable proof.

She also feared that he was her own enemy, likewise.

Yes, feared!

For she knew that the love which he professed for her was of the fierce kind that would turn to hatred when it should prove to be hopeless.

Of one thing she was sure, and that was that she could never love Gilbert Dawson under any circumstances.

"I will ask Norman this evening what Gilbert Dawson meant," she said to herself. "I am sure there is some plot against him, and he ought to be forewarned."

"Clarice!"

The girl started joyfully, though with true maiden modesty she tried to conceal the pleasure she felt at hearing her lover's voice.

So she turned her head carelessly and glancing over the top of her rocker, said:

"Come in."

The direction was hardly necessary, for Norman Reynolds was already in.

"Sit down."

The young man obeyed, and folded his hands with a great show of docility.

"Don't be a goose!" said the girl, as she looked proudly at his athletic figure, and thought how nice it would be some day to own that strong frame, and have it ever at her side, devoted to her will, and daring all for her happiness.

"Are you sure you were not hurt to-day, Norman?" she asked. "When you were thrown down among the horses' hoofs I was afraid you were killed. Oh! it was terrible!"

"The only terrible part of it to me, was the sight of you in that seat by yourself, with those wild ponies trying their best to smash the carriage," returned Norman. "If it hadn't been for Owney, I don't know what would have been the end of it. He's an invaluable fellow, though he is only a mere boy."

"He's one of the bravest men I ever saw," said Clarice, enthusiastically. "His grasp on the horses seemed to be like iron."

"I must bring him here to let you tell him so. Only I am afraid I shall be getting jealous after a while," laughed Norman Reynolds.

"Bring him, by all means. I am afraid I did not thank him half enough this afternoon."

"By the way, what started the ponies? I have always considered that you had skill enough to drive anything."

Clarice's brow contracted slightly as she replied:

"Oh, it was nothing in particular. They saw something unpleasant on the road and they wanted to get past."

"And you let them go?"

"Yes. I was quite willing that they should pass it as quickly as possible."

"Why?"

"Because I wanted to get away from it myself."

"Was it unpleasant to you, too?"

"Yes."

"What was it—a piece of paper, a strange dog, or what?"

"It was a dog—a cur!"

"A cur?"

"Yes, one I felt tempted to thrash with my whip as I passed it, only I did not wish to contaminate my whip-lash!"

Clarice's little hands were clinched and her foot was tapping on the carpet, as if she were now, in imagination, putting her whip around the body of the cur she described.

"You seem to think that cur was worse than the average specimen. Was it a 'yaller dorg,' Clarice?" asked Norman.

"It was a cur which would fawn upon you and then bite your hand unawares."

"Heavens! Do you know the animal, Clarice?"

"I have seen it several times."

"You talk in riddles. What kind of a creature is this terrible cur?"

"They call it Gilbert Dawson!"

Norman Reynolds ground his teeth as he started to his feet.

"Do you mean to intimate that that scoundrel has been annoying you again?" he asked, as he strode up and down the room.

"Sit down, Norman. It was hardly as bad as that."

"Did he speak to you?"

"No. He was walking quietly along."

"He did not frighten your ponies?"

"No."

"Has he spoken to you lately?"

"Yes."

"Ah!"

"He was here this afternoon."

"This afternoon?"

"Yes."

"What did he want? You told him definitely before that he could never make you change your feelings toward him, did you not?"

"I did."

"Then what could he want? I'll knock his head off if he persists in annoying you!"

"No, no, Norman; you must not do that. Remember the match. Yale must win, and you must control your feelings until after the game. You say yourself that Gilbert Dawson is one of the best rushers in the team, and you must not quarrel with him at present."

The two, as they sat and talked in the brilliantly-lighted parlor, did not notice that the window-shades were drawn up nearly to the top, and that people passing along the street could see into the room.

They did not think of looking toward the large bay window at all.

If they had, they might have seen a face pressed against the glass, taking full note of everything within.

It was a face Norman Reynolds would have recognized at once.

It was a face he had seen when he had been rudely awakened from slumber in the cabin of his yacht, the Siren.

It was the face of Jim Riggan.

At the side of the window, where a small ventilator in one of the panes of the glass could be easily opened from the outside, stood another man.

This latter kept himself very carefully concealed in the mass of Virginia creeper that grew over the porch and on the front of the house, while his ear was close to the open ventilator and enabled him to hear every word spoken in the parlor.

"Well, boss, how long's this yer' thing to last?" grumbled Jim Riggan. "This yer' is a very damp place for a gentleman to stand, an' I don't see no good to come from it."

"Be quiet," whispered Gilbert Dawson, fiercely, "and do as you are told. You are going to be paid for it, are you not?"

"All right, boss; don't get mad," said Jim Riggan, apologetically. "I was only a-makin' a remark."

"Don't make any more remarks then."

"I won't."

Gilbert Dawson, who had heard the uncomplimentary remarks of Clarice in relation to himself with a dark frown, resumed his listening attitude.

"Oh, so he's not to quarrel with me till after the football match, eh? Very considerate of you, I am sure, Miss Le Fevre. You think I am one of the best rushers in the team, do you?" he muttered.

"Well, perhaps I may spoil your neat little plans, after all. I have made up my mind that if I don't have you he sha'n't, and as for the football match, if Oxbridge doesn't beat Yale so badly that our boys will never know what struck them, I am badly out in my calculations."

Jim Riggan heard his patron muttering, but did not think it exactly safe to ask him what he was talking about.

"Jim," said Gilbert Dawson, suddenly.

"Well, what's up?"

"Did you fix that parlor door?"

"You bet! The front door was unfastened, so I just slid naterally into the hall, turned the key, shot the bolt and then shoved in a little wooden wedge so that they couldn't open that there parlor from the inside in a month."

"Good!"

"Yes, I think it wasn't so very rusty, myself."

"Have you that apparatus ready?"

"What, this here windbag, bottle and hose jiggermaree? Yes, here it is."

"Give it to me."

Jim Riggan handed to Gilbert Dawson a bottle to which was attached the inflated leather bag and a small piece of india-rubber pipe with a metal nozzle.

Gilbert Dawson put the metal nozzle through the ventilator and pressed the leather bag.

A spray of invisible vapor poured into the room.

"Now, Norman, you will promise me not to quarrel with him before the game, will you not? You know how my heart is set on Yale being victorious. I should never look up again, I believe, if the Englishmen were to beat you," Clarice was saying.

"You are enthusiastic, dear," said Norman Reynolds. "You must remember that there are always chances of unfortunate circumstances arising that may bring defeat."

"Where the honor of American students are at stake there should be no chances," said Clarice.

"Well spoken, little girl! You shall win!"

"Oh, Norman, I was going to ask you. Let me look at that picture of mine. You have it with you, I know, because you promised me that it should never be away from you, sleeping or waking."

Norman colored and looked guilty.

"Why, Clarice, my dear, the fact is, it—it is in another pocket. It is the first time it has ever occurred since you gave it to me."

Clarice turned away with a hurt expression on her lovely face.

"Norman, you know what you said—that if that picture ever went out of your possession I might consider that your regard for me was weakening. Don't you remember saying so?"

"Yes, dear, but—"

"Now, I am not superstitious, but—I wish you had not done it."

"Clarice, I will have the picture to show you to-morrow," said Norman eagerly.

Clarice was about to reply, but instead, put her hand to her forehead and rubbed her eyes impatiently.

"Norman, do you know I feel so sleepy. I wonder what can be the matter? Perhaps it was that shaking in the phaeton this afternoon that has affected me."

"Very likely, dear," returned Norman Reynolds, trying to repress a yawn. "I feel the same way myself. But, Clarice," he continued, "I hope you do not feel annoyed over that picture. I will surely bring it to-morrow."

Clarice's eyelids dropped, but she lifted them with an effort as she said:

"I hope you will, Norman. I cannot help thinking of your words."

The eyelids dropped again, and Clarice's head fell back in her rocking-chair.

"Strange!" said Norman Reynolds to himself. "I wonder what is the matter? I feel as if I must drop down and go to sleep myself. Perhaps the room is too warm. He staggered to the door, but could not open it."

"Stuck fast, I guess," he muttered. "I'll try the window."

The subtle influence that had now rendered Clarice totally unconscious was overpowering him more and more.

His sight was so dim that he could hardly distinguish anything, while his limbs seemed to have lost nearly all their strength.

He moved mechanically toward the window.

"Ah! You villain!" he exclaimed, as he saw, as if in a dream, the face of Jim Riggan, and then—all was blank.

"That's good," said Gilbert Dawson. "This vaporizer is the handiest thing I ever saw. You see how useful it is to have a practical knowledge of chemistry. I didn't have to get anybody to make this little machine for me, but just manufactured it myself."

He kept on pouring more of the powerful vapor into the room to keep the sleepers under the influence as he spoke.

"Well, what's the next thing?" asked Jim Riggan. "That feller's laid out on the floor, and as for the girl, she looks as if she had piped out."

"No fear. This substance is quite harmless. She will wake up in the course of half an hour, with nothing the matter but a slight headache."

Gilbert Dawson tore a leaf from a note-book and wrote a few lines.

"Open the window, Jim."

"All right. Anything better than standin' around out here," returned Jim Riggan, cheerfully, as he proceeded to force open the window with professional skill.

In less than a minute the window, which opened nearly to the ground, was pushed up.

"Get inside and bring him out," said Gilbert.

"By myself?"

"Yes."

"I can't carry no such man as that," said Jim Riggan, looking down at Norman Reynolds, as he lay stretched on the carpet just inside.

"It will not be necessary to carry him. Shake him a little and help him to his feet. He will be able to walk with assistance."

"But p'raps he won't go with us. Hadn't yer better give him a little more of that stuff?"

"Do as I tell you," said Gilbert Dawson, impatiently. "He won't know where he is going. The stuff, as you call it has clouded his brain completely, and there is no danger of his giving you any trouble."

"All right, boss. You are paying for this job, but I don't want to get to Sing Sing just yer," grumbled Jim Riggan.

"Do your work and don't talk," was Gilbert Dawson's stern command.

Jim Riggan stumbled into the room and stooped over Norman Reynolds's prostrate form.

"Here, put this note on the table by the side of the young lady," said Gilbert Dawson, handing the scrap of paper from his note-book, to the other.

Jim Riggan took the folded paper and laid it on the table, as directed.

As he passed Clarice he accidentally pushed her chair a little.

She moved and muttered the name of Norman. "Ah I think that note will settle Norman for a time," said Gilbert Dawson, evidently, "especially if we keep him out of sight for a few weeks."

Jim Riggan helped Norman Reynolds to his feet, and led him through the window, where Gilbert Dawson took his arm and steadied him against the outside wall.

Norman's eyes were shut, and he seemed to be fast asleep, though he obeyed the guidance of any one holding him.

"Shut the window and then take the wedge away from that parlor door. Unlock and unbolt it, too. There must be no trace of this business for the detectives to work on," said Gilbert.

Jim Riggan obeyed, closing the window and then slipping into the hall and unfastening the parlor door without meeting anybody.

"That substance will evaporate in a short time and she will think she dropped asleep naturally, and that this courteous gentleman slipped out without disturbing her. I should like to see her face when she reads that note," said Gilbert, as with Jim Riggan on the other side of Norman Reynolds, they led him down the carriage drive and around the corner.

There they found a buggy, the horse hitched to a post, and no one in sight.

Norman Reynolds was hoisted into the buggy, with the two worthies on each side of him.

Gilbert Dawson seized the reins and drove rapidly in the direction of the wharf, in the outskirts of the city, from whence the Sound steamer would leave at midnight for New York.

As he drove along a dark street he almost ran over a man, swearing desperately at him for getting in the way.

"Seems to me as if I knew that voice," said the man, who was dressed in seedy, shabby-genteel clothes, and wore a plug hat, as he meekly walked away.

CHAPTER VIII.

TACT AGAINST CUNNING.

THE seedy man, who thought he knew Gilbert Dawson's voice, was knocking at the door of Norman Reynolds's room in the college building half an hour later.

"He's not home," said a young fellow in the next apartment, who was lazily smoking a cigar, with his heels on the mantle-piece, while he carelessly glanced at a "Virgil" in his left hand.

"What time do you think he will be in?" humbly asked the seedy man.

The young fellow turned around in his chair to take a good look at the questioner, and replied:

"Well, now, I ain't watching Norman Reynolds's movements, and I couldn't exactly tell you, but I don't think he'll be very late. He's supposed to be in training, and a man that's getting up his strength and stamina, can't afford to keep late hours and have a good time."

"I beg your pardon. Do you play in the football eleven that's to meet the English team?" asked the seedy man.

"Well, now, you bet I do. I'm the half-back of the team."

"Then let me advise you to put that cigar away. I am interested in Yale myself, and I do not want to see her lose the game on account of her 'half-back' smoking cigars when the captain is not around to look after things."

The young man involuntarily took the cigar from his lips and threw it in the grate.

"I think you've got considerable cheek!" he grumbled, "but you are right about the cigar."

"I know I am."

"Well, don't tell Norman when you see him. He's terribly strict with us."

"I will not."

"If you like to wait for him, you can sit down here," went on the youngster.

"Never mind, thank you. I'll take a walk for an hour and come back again," said the seedy man.

Git Thar Owney (for of course the reader has recognized the young detective under the guise of the seedy man) strolled aimlessly along thinking.

Suddenly he stopped, as if a new idea had struck him with resistless force.

"By heavens!" he ejaculated, "that's who it was, Gilbert Dawson, as sure as fate. What was he doing? Where was he going? Who had he got with him in the buggy?"

Git Thar Owney quickened his pace and walked toward the house of Clarice Le Fevre.

He stood astride the parlor window and looked in. Clarice was still sleeping in her chair.

The potent chemical that Gilbert Dawson had used had not expended its force.

"That's funny!" said Owney. "It isn't often that a young lady goes to sleep in her chair in that way with the window shades all drawn up. And—somehow—she don't seem to be lying quite natural."

He looked closely at the window-panes.

Something had caught his professional eye that would probably have escaped that of the ordinary observer.

"Just what I thought," he muttered. "There's been some one operating here. Where can Reynolds be? I know he intended coming here to-night. There is some mystery about all this that I must clear up."

He saw that the window had been forced from the outside.

"Jimmied! And by a professional, too! I bet it was Riggan's work," he added, as he examined the marks more closely. "Yes, I'd know his work among a thousand. There is some devilry on foot by that fellow Dawson, I am sure."

He went to the front door and rung the bell.

"An' who did ye want to see?" asked Bridget Maloney.

"Miss Le Fevre."

"Dunno whether you kin, indade, then," said the damsel. "Oi dunno whether she bees in the parlor or not, but Oi'll go and see."

"Miss Clarice, here's a mon phwants to see yez, an' be the powers, he's been in bad loock, lately, joodzing from the looks of him."

Clarice, with an effort, opened her eyes and asked Bridget what she said.

"Here's a man as phwants to spake wid yez, mum. Shall Oi ax him to kim in?"

"Yes," returned Clarice, as she put her hand to her forehead.

Git Thar Owney stepped into the parlor.

Bridget Maloney, as she went out and shut the door, said to herself:

"Indade then, an' if Oi was him, Oi'd buy a new hat, if it took the last silver I could raise."

Git Thar Owney stood for a moment behind Clarice's chair, and quickly removed his disguise in the way described before.

Then he walked in front of the young lady.

She looked up at him a moment in uncertainty, and then, recognizing him as her preserver of the afternoon, arose and gave him her hand.

"Git Thar Owney!"

"Yes, that is what they call me."

Clarice pressed her hand to her head.

"I think I have been asleep," she said, with a faint smile, "though I can hardly understand it. Mr. Reynolds was here, and I do not remember his going away. I feel completely mystified."

A note on the table caught her eye.

"What is this?" she asked, as she opened the paper and glanced at its contents.

She read it over twice, and then sunk into her chair, looking straight before her, with doubt, mystification and astonishment chasing each other over her features.

"What do you think this letter means?" she asked, as she handed it to Owney.

He took it and read aloud:

"DEAR CLARICE:—Circumstances compel me to leave the city immediately. I am ashamed to confess to you that I was unworthy of you, and I thought I could prepare you for the revelation by denying that I had your picture. It was in my pocket when I spoke, but I intend to give it to one whom we have both slandered, but who I am now convinced loves you with more sincerity and fervor than myself. Good-by forever. For the honor of Yale I will try and be back in time to play in the football match. N. R."

"What is your opinion of that letter?" asked Clarice, anxiously.

"What is yours?" demanded Owney.

"That it is a vile plot to injure Norman Reynolds, and try to turn me against him."

"You are right! And the plotter is of course—"

"Gilbert Dawson."

"But, the letter?"

Clarice took up the note again and scanned it closely.

"Is a forgery!"

"Sure?"

"Yes, and a clumsy one, too. I know Norman Reynolds's writing too well to be deceived."

"But how do you account for its being here, in this room?"

"I don't know."

"But I do," assured Owney, quietly but confidently.

"The window was forced, and the note placed here by a man in the employ of Gilbert Dawson."

"Do you know that?" asked Clarice, in surprise.

"I do."

"How?"

"By unmistakable signs. I am quite sure that one Jim Riggan forced that window, and the natural supposition is that he put the letter on the table."

"But why did Mr. Reynolds go away so suddenly, and why did I fall asleep? I can't understand it."

"I can. You were drugged or chloroformed. That accounts for your dropping asleep."

"But Mr. Reynolds! Where has he gone?"

"That I must find out."

"Do you think he is in any danger?"

"I hope not. He's a stout young fellow, and can protect himself unless the odds are too great."

"Have you any idea where he is likely to be?"

"I have an idea, but it may be a false one," returned Owney.

"You have?" joyfully.

"Yes."

"You will try and find him and help him and me, will you not?" asked Clarice, looking earnestly in his face.

"I will find him and get the better of Jim Riggan and that fellow Gilbert Dawson as sure as my name is Git Thar Owney."

"When will you commence the search?"

"Now. Good-by! Do not get disheartened, but keep up your courage until you hear from me."

Without another word he left her.

In the dark street outside he resumed his disguise, and then walked briskly in the direction of the steamboat wharf.

"They are sure to go to New York," he reflected, "and they are equally sure to go on that midnight boat. Gilbert Dawson, Git Thar Owney is on your trail!"

It was half past eleven when Git Thar Owney, having secured a ticket for New York in the office on the wharf, stepped aboard the boat and paid for a state-room.

"Pretty good crowd aboard?" asked Git Thar Owney of the clerk, as the latter handed him the

key of his state-room through the little window of his office.

"Pretty good. There are a lot of Princeton boys going home. They have been here giving Yale a tussle at base ball."

"That so? What was the score?" asked Owney, with the deep interest in the national game that is felt by every true American—especially when he happens to be a young man of twenty."

"Three to two in favor of Yale," was the reply.

"Close game," observed Owney.

"Yes, but our boys would have waxed them much worse than that if Reynolds and Dawson had been playing," said the clerk, confidently.

"They didn't play, eh?"

"No; I guess they are both sorry themselves for the football match with the Britishers."

"Very likely. Any other passengers besides the Princeton boys to-night?" asked Owney, carelessly, but keeping a watchful eye on everything going on around him.

"Oh, yes; a few."

"Any ladies?"

"No. Let me see. There's old Mr. Collins, going on his regular weekly trip to the city. Then there's an advance agent for a show that's coming to the Opera House next week, and a couple of drummers, and a fellow that looks like a fisherman—"

"A fisherman?" put in Git Thar Owney.

"Yes, a fellow in a rough sack coat and a slouch hat. He took a state-room for himself and two swellish looking fellows, that stood back so that I couldn't see their faces."

"Then you don't know who they are at all?"

"Haven't the least idea," said the clerk, as he turned toward a fussy, puffy man who wanted a state room where the window wouldn't let in the water and where the noise of the engine would not keep him awake all night."

"It is them sure!" muttered Git Thar Owney to himself. "Look out Gilbert Dawson, and you, too, Jim Riggan, for I am after both of you!"

"What did you say was the number of their room?" asked Owney, when the puffy man had been satisfactorily served.

"It's Number 25—right next to your own," replied the clerk. "D'ye think you know the parties?"

"Believe I do," returned Owney, carelessly.

He walked slowly toward his own state-room unlocked the door, and entering, fastened it.

He could hear low voices in the next room.

"What are they talking about, I wonder?" said Git Thar Owney, to himself. "I would give five dollars to be able to see into that room."

He had not formulated any plan of procedure yet, but he was determined that if, as he suspected, Gilbert Dawson and Jim Riggan were in the room next to him he would fathom their intentions with regard to Norman Reynolds and put on foot some means of upsetting their plans, before the steamer reached New York.

While thus reflecting he noticed a ray of light streaming through the partition that separated him from the cabin in which he suspected Jim Riggan, Gilbert Dawson, and somebody else of whose identity he could not yet be sure, were installed.

In a second Git Thar Owney's eye was opposite the little hole through which the light streamed.

"The deuce take it! it is too small!" exclaimed Git Thar Owney, impatiently.

His pocket-knife was instantly brought into use, and very soon the hole was enlarged enough to give Owney a fair view of the interior of the cabin.

"There they are, by the Lord," he said. "There's that villainous Riggan, and there our amiable friend, Mr. Dawson; but what is that on the bed? It looks like—it is—Norman Reynolds. What is he lying down for? He is asleep, I believe. I can see him breathing. If this isn't the funniest thing I ever saw."

He sat down on his bed and tried to make up his mind what to do.

Should he burst right into the cabin and arrest Dawson and Riggan at once?

He had ample authority for doing so.

But, no; second thoughts showed him that such hasty action would be foolish.

He wanted to find out just what Gilbert Dawson's intentions were, and to do that he must curb his impatience and use judgment.

He went back to his peep-hole.

Norman Reynolds was still lying in the lower berth, sleeping peacefully, while Gilbert Dawson and Jim Riggan were conversing in low tones.

"As long as they are letting him sleep, it will be no good to raise a fuss now. I've got them safe on the boat, and I can easily take care of them when we get to New York," he reflected, as he walked out of the state-room and locked the door behind him.

He strolled to the ticket-clerk's window.

The clerk was alone.

"Do you know what this is?" asked Git Thar Owney, throwing open his coat.

The clerk's eyes opened with surprise, as he replied:

"Yes, sir; that's a detective's badge. Are you a detective? From New York, I presume?"

Git Thar Owney nodded.

"I have reason to believe that certain parties I am after are on this boat. I suppose the display of this badge to any of the officers will be enough to prevent my being interfered with. I want to be allowed to go where I please on board."

"Certainly."

"What time do we start?" asked a voice at Git Thar Owney's elbow.

"In about ten minutes," replied the clerk.

"Thanks!"

As the man who had asked the question moved away the clerk said to Owney:

"Wasn't that one of the parties you want?"

"Why?"

"Because he kind of jumped when he saw you, as if he had seen you before. Then he sneaked back to his cabin as soon as he could."

"Is that so?" said Owney. Then to himself he added:

"You have sharp eyes, Jim Riggan, but you are not a match yet for Git Thar Owney!"

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE EMBRACE OF DEATH.

THE first thing Owney did when he found that Jim Riggan had recognized him was to watch the gang-plank and to look along the boat to see that there was no chance of any one getting off without using the regular gangway.

Having satisfied himself on this point Owney lounged in the vicinity of the gangway until the boat pushed off.

A number of Yale boys were on the boat to see their Princeton visitors off.

The best of feeling prevailed among the representatives of the two colleges, and the college yells were being exchanged with much gusto and good fellowship.

Git Thar Owney stood quietly among the crowd of noisy students, with his eyes open for any movement on the part of Jim Riggan or Gilbert Dawson.

"Once let us get out in the Sound, and I shall not care," he thought, "but as long as we are at the dock I don't know what tricks they may play."

There was a ringing of the big bell, and the Yale students began to bustle up the gang-plank.

Git Thar Owney closely scrutinized every face but those of either Gilbert Dawson or Jim Riggan were not among them.

The Princeton and Yale boys exchanged yells as long as the boat was within sound of the wharf, and then, as the engines settled down to their steady clank clank and bore the steamer on its way to New York, the passengers began to compose themselves for the trip.

Owney returned to his state-room and peeped through the little hole.

The cabin was empty!

Owney looked again!

He could hardly believe his eyes!

Yes; there could be no doubt of it! Gilbert Dawson, Jim Riggan and the sleeper, whoever he was, had all disappeared.

Owney went to the clerk's little office.

"Have you seen anything of that party who asked you what time the boat would start?" asked Git Thar Owney.

"No."

"He isn't in his cabin."

"Well, that's nothing. He may be taking a smoke on the deck somewhere."

"Maybe," acquiesced Git Thar Owney.

It might have been possible that Jim Riggan was smoking somewhere, but that did not account for the disappearance of Dawson and the man who a few minutes before had been sound asleep.

Owney was convinced that Jim Riggan had given him the slip in some way.

Now the question arose, was he on the boat or had he and his companions got ashore in some way, and allowed him to go to New York on a wild-goose chase?

Git Thar Owney was not in the habit of showing signs of vexation, but he could not repress his feelings on this occasion.

He hammered his head with his fist two or three times, and stamped his foot viciously.

"Well, it's no use crying over spilled milk. I'll search the boat from stem to stern," he muttered.

First he looked all through the saloon.

Not there, certainly!

He convinced himself of that fact in a very few minutes.

Then he looked in every hole and corner of the vessel where he thought they might be concealed.

No results!

Owney had searched in all the likely and unlikely places on the boat, and was forced to come to the conclusion that Riggan and Dawson had got ashore in some way before the boat started.

He was sitting disconsolately on a barrel that formed part of a tremendous heap of miscellaneous freight between decks, when he heard a voice that he recognized as that of Riggan, saying:

"Well, see here, boss, I don't much like this job. We're in a pretty mess, I tell yer."

"Shut your mouth," said Gilbert Dawson's voice.

Git Thar Owney rubbed his hands with glee.

"I dunno whether I'll shut my mouth or not," said Riggan. "You are as badly in this thing as I am. Remember that when you wrote that letter and signed Mr. Reynolds's initials to it you committed forgery."

"Hush!" said Gilbert Dawson, and from the muffled sounds that escaped Riggan, Git Thar Owney knew that Dawson's hand was over his mouth.

"You are right there," said Git Thar Owney to himself. "Mr. Dawson was very indiscreet in that matter."

"Haden't you better give that fellow a little more of your chemical stuff?" went on Jim Riggan. "He appears to be wakin' up a little too much."

Git Thar Owney started, as a light broke over him.

He saw it all now!

The stranger whom he had seen asleep, and who he imagined bore some resemblance to Norman Reynolds, was indeed the young man, drugged and helpless, in the power of his bitterest enemy.

But where were they?

He looked at the freight, but could not understand how there could be any hiding-place among the barrels, boxes and bales lumbered up promiscuously on the deck.

He was on the main deck, and there was but little light where he was seated.

"I'll give this place a thorough search, anyhow," he muttered.

He took a small bull's-eye lantern from an inside pocket and flashed it over the heap of baggage.

A deck-hand came to him and asked him what he was doing.

For reply Owney threw open his coat and displayed his badge.

The deck-hand walked away without further questioning.

All through the baggage Owney looked without any result.

The voices of Jim Riggan and Gilbert Dawson had ceased, but he knew they were somewhere in the vicinity.

"There must be some secret hiding place that they had discovered where they hoped to be safe from Git Thar Owney."

He determined to unearth them, and now that he knew they were on the boat, felt as sure of them as if he had his hands on them.

Now that he knew Norman Reynolds was with them, he had no motive in putting off Riggan's arrest.

All he wanted was to get the young man back to New Haven, and bring him into good physical condition for the football match.

The schemes of Gilbert Dawson could not matter provided they were frustrated.

The picture of the young lady had been stolen, but when she understood the treachery that had been practiced on Norman Reynolds, she could hardly blame him for a misfortune.

But now, where were they?

He had heard enough to make him understand how Norman Reynolds had been induced to leave New Haven and take the midnight boat to New York.

They were secreted probably in one of those little closets or extra rooms that abound on any large steamer.

He knew he could find out directly if he chose to ask the captain's assistance, but he preferred to fight it out by himself.

So he turned over the baggage again, with his bull's-eye flashing in all directions.

All at once he heaved a deep sigh of satisfaction, and looked cautiously around to see if his movements were observed.

His lantern was sending a stream of light on a certain part of the deck that had been covered by a small box.

The object that had caught Owney's eye was an iron ring fastened in a staple in the floor.

A trap-door!

Owney seized the ring and tried to lift the trap.

It was as firm as the deck itself.

"Oho! You are holding it down from the inside, are you?" he muttered. "Well, I'll see what leverage will do."

He had noticed several long iron bars lying on one side among the freight.

He thrust one of the bars about half-way through the ring.

Then letting one end of the bar rest on the floor, he lifted the other with all his strength.

The result was that the trap opened an inch or two, and then shut down again.

Try as hard as he would he could not lift the trap more than a couple of inches.

Jim Riggan and Gilbert Dawson were evidently determined not to be dragged out of their hole if they could possibly avoid it.

"All right, my amiable friends," said Owney, "then we will try an extra bit of lever power. You've got to come out if it takes all night."

He allowed the bar he had thrust through the ring to remain there. Then he picked up another bar, and placing one end on the floor, with it lifted the end of the bar through the ring.

By this means he obtained just twice as much leverage as he had at first.

"Now, up she goes!" he exclaimed.

He raised the bar, and this time all the efforts of those below were futile.

The trap was pulled wide open and Git Thar Owney was able to look down.

He flashed his lantern down the hole and saw that it was a little room containing a bunk and two camp-stools.

It was lighted in the daytime by an ordinary round port-hole, and was evidently an extra cabin for the use of a prisoner whom it was not deemed advisable to keep in any public part of the vessel.

On the bed lay Norman Reynolds.

His face was turned upward, and when Owney flashed the light of his bull's-eye into the little cabin it fell full on his features.

He was still fast asleep.

Gilbert Dawson and Jim Riggan both stood up, looking at Git Thar Owney.

"Come on, Jim Riggan. The game's up," said Owney. "You may as well surrender peaceably."

"Suppose I don't, what'll you do?"

"Oh, but you will," said Owney. "It will pay you better than to play the fool any longer."

"Who the deuce are you?" asked Gilbert Dawson, fiercely.

"Git Thar Owney, they call me, and I generally 'git thar,'" was Owney's imperturbable reply.

"Well, Git Thar Owney," returned Gilbert Dawson, with a sneer, "I don't think you will 'git thar,' as you call it on this occasion. We are passengers in this boat. We have paid our fare, and we do not

know by what right you intrude yourself on our privacy."

"Big words, Mr. Gilbert Dawson, but, thrown away on me. I know you too, as it happens. And what are you doing with that gentleman in the bunk?" asked Owney.

"My sick brother, whom I am taking to New York for treatment."

"He doesn't look very sick."

Gilbert Dawson touched his forehead.

"It is his mind," he said, with a grin.

"You infernal liar!" yelled Git Thar Owney, unable to control his passion longer. "I'll see the captain and have you both in irons before you are ten minutes older."

He shut down the trap-door with a bang and turned around to seek some of the officers of the boat.

He found that in searching through the freight he had displaced the heavy boxes, barrels and other things so that he was completely hemmed in.

There was nothing for it but to move them one by one, and make a passage out for himself.

He set to work as vigorously as possible, but it was a heavy job, and it took him at least a quarter of an hour before he was able to extricate himself.

"I have the satisfaction of knowing that I have piled up things on that trap so that there is no fear of their getting out before I go back," said Owney, with a grim smile.

Now, should he go to the captain, after all, he debated.

He did not like to ask any assistance in his work, and he would much rather get Norman Reynolds out and bring Jim Riggan and Gilbert Dawson to terms himself, if possible.

He stood leaning on the rail at the side of the boat, looking down into the water, as he reflected.

There was no one near him, and nobody on board knew that he had discovered the people for whom he was looking in that secret closet under the great heap of freight.

He would go back and parley with Riggan and Dawson again.

He thought he could bring them to terms somehow.

He would try, anyway.

He turned away from the rail, and was about to step back to the heap of freight piled over the trap-door.

He had his hand on the first barrel to roll it aside, when—

An arm was passed around his neck, and a knee was thrust violently into his back!

Then another arm went around his chest, and squeezed him so tightly that he could hardly breathe.

Git Thar Owney was very strong, but his strength availed him but little.

The arm around his throat tightened and drew him resistlessly backward, the knee in his back forcing him into an utterly helpless attitude.

Owney was being garroted!

He would have had no chance even if he had been attacked by only one man.

The peculiar manner in which a garroter seizes his victim renders the latter helpless, even though he may be stronger than his assailant.

With two men holding him, he could not make the least resistance.

"What shall we do with him?" asked a hoarse voice, evidently disguised.

"There is only one thing to do," said another, also disguised. "Over with him!"

Heavens! They were going to throw him into the sea!

Slowly they forced him on the rail.

He grasped at it with one of his hands, but a blow with a stick made him relinquish his hold.

Then he made a wild grab at the empty air, and the next minute was in the cold water that seethed and foamed around the fast-moving steamboat.

As he fell, he caught sight of two white and horrified faces looking over the rail.

Gilbert Dawson and Jim Riggan!

CHAPTER X.

VERY DEAD OLD SAILOR IN THE OWLS' NEST.

IT was broad daylight and bright sunshine in the streets of New York.

It was ten o'clock in the morning, and the business of the metropolis was in full swing.

Everything was bright, joyous and active, and it was hard to imagine that the same city could at night be so dark as we have seen it.

But though the streets were bright and full of sunlight, the basement kitchen, which was the rendezvous of the Hoot Owls, looked just the same as at night.

All the light admitted to the room was from the coal-oil lamps scattered here and there, and inside there was nothing to indicate that the streets were bathing in the sunlight of a bright autumn day.

The only occupants of the room, however, were Jim Riggan, Uncle Dave and Gilbert Dawson.

"Well, we've got him here, Mr. Dawson," said Jim Riggan. "The next thing is what are we going to do with him?"

"Keep him here until I tell you to release him," replied Dawson, savagely.

"That's a good idea, but it isn't over safe for us, you know, Mr. Dawson," put in Uncle Dave. "We have to run the Owl's Nest on strictly lawful principles, or we should soon have the cops down on us."

"Lawful!" sneered Dawson.

"Just so," put in Jim Riggan, "that is, for all the outside world knows. We try to be respectable in the eyes of our neighbors, no matter what we do privately. That's the way with a good many other people we know, eh, Mr. Dawson?"

There was a significant grin on Jim Riggan's face, which Gilbert Dawson resented at once.

"What do you mean? Is that an insinuation that I—"

"Hold on, Mr. Dawson, we ain't a-insinneratin' nothin'. But you shouldn't insult gentlemen in their own house, 'cause it ain't pleasant, an' I don't know as it's even perlitte. Eh, Uncle Dave what do you think?"

"You're quite c'rect, Jimmy. I'm sorry that Mr. Dawson should have hurt your feelings. As for me, I'm old and tough, and things like that don't bother me so much as they do you tender young fellers."

The old man guffawed and Gilbert Dawson frowned.

"I wish you would not talk nonsense," he said. "I am paying you for attending to my business, and I do not desire to listen to dissertations on the comparative respectability of you and your friends."

"Well, now, Mr. Dawson, you say we are to keep this feller until you tell us to let him go. Do you know that he will be a pretty hard man to keep?" asked Jim Riggan.

"Pshaw! Anything is possible in New York City. You have him all right in that room, haven't you?"

"Guess so. We'll go and see if you like," said Uncle Dave.

"Well."

A small door in a corner of the room, that looked as if it might belong to a cupboard, was unlocked by Uncle Dave.

A space a few feet square was disclosed.

"Come in," said Uncle Dave.

Gilbert Dawson and Jim Riggan stepped inside by the side of Uncle Dave, and the latter pulled the door shut, fastening it with its spring lock.

There was a sound of sliding bolts, for it was too dark to see anything, and then another door of iron opened, and disclosed the room in which Norman Reynolds was confined.

Room it could hardly be called. It was a cellar.

Built entirely of brick and stone, with a boarded floor over the stone foundation, it was as strong as a prison cell.

Overhead, the arched ceiling was relieved in one place by a square opening, about two feet each way, which was covered with very thick flint glass, letting in a dim light.

There was a cot bed, a rough table and a stool.

On the bed lay Norman Reynolds, with his back to the door.

The powerful drug that Gilbert Dawson had administered in the form of vapor so repeatedly and persistently during the previous night had left the victim in a weak and hardly conscious state.

He did not turn around when the door opened.

"Asleep?" whispered Gilbert Dawson to Jim Riggan.

"Dunno! But you had better keep back. You don't want him to see you, do you?"

Gilbert took the hint and drew back into the shadow of the space between the two doors.

Riggan walked over to Norman and touched him.

"What is it?" asked the young man, in a dreamy tone. "What is all this? Where's Git Thar Owney?"

"Ah, where is he—that's the question?" said Jim Riggan to himself.

Norman tried to exert himself and sit up on his cot, but his strength failed him and he fell helplessly back.

"I'm afraid you gave him a pretty big dose that time, Mr. Dawson," said Riggan. "He don't seem to revive very fast."

"He will be all right in the course of an hour or two," replied Gilbert. "It is just as well that he should be a little sleepy until we make up our minds what to do with him. Keep him here for a day, at all events. Then I will decide what is next to be done."

"All right, Mr. Dawson; whatever you say, goes, of course," returned Riggan.

The three worthies left Norman Reynolds on his cot and returned to the main room.

"What do you think you will do with him, boss?" asked Uncle Dave, as soon as they were out of hearing of the captive.

"Well, there is a Cunard steamer leaving to-morrow morning for Liverpool."

"Yes."

"I will let you go and secure a passage for one—steerage."

"Yes."

"To-morrow morning you go on board as if you were going to Europe."

"Me," said Uncle Dave. "I don't 'zackly foller you. I don't want to go to Europe."

"Wait until I have finished," said Gilbert Dawson, impatiently.

"Go on."

"You go aboard as if you were a passenger."

"Aha!"

"Three friends come to say good-by and see you off for the old country."

"Yes."

"The bell will ring for everybody except the passengers to go ashore."

"Yes."

"Your three friends will go ashore, the steamer will start for Europe, and Norman Reynolds will be out of the way for as long as I want."

"But I don't see it. You say my three friends will go ashore. I suppose my three friends will be this Mr. Reynolds, and two fellers as will be takin' care on him. But you say they will come ashore again. Blessed if I understand it at all, said Uncle Dave, very much mystified.

"That's 'cause you can't understand nothin', no-how," put in Jim Riggan. "The thing's plain

enough. When the visitors has to go ashore, you'll just have to leave this Mr. Reynolds in the bunk and come away yourself. The people on the steamer won't know the difference so long as they have the right number of passengers, and Mr. Reynolds will be dosed with that stuff the boss knows how to use, so that he will lie quiet enough until the ship gets away out to sea. Then he can talk all he likes, but he'll have to go to Europe anyhow, d'ye see?"

"That is the plan exactly," said Gilbert Dawson. "Now, who is to go with him to the steamer? Jim Riggan and yourself will do your parts, of course, but we need another man. Who can do it?"

"Why not do it yerself, boss?" asked Riggan.

"You forget that I must not appear in it or all my plans will go for nothing," replied Gilbert Dawson, testily.

"That's so," said Uncle Dave.

"Well, I don't know of any one I can trust except Bill Sharpe," observed Jim Riggan. "Bill Sharpe is a man I don't like so much as I did, since he played me a dirty trick on the river night before last; but he's a good man for a job of this kind. He can lie like a lawyer, and he ain't got no conscience at all."

"Well, where is Bill Sharpe?"

"I dunno. He ran away from here when I was a-doin' that work for you in the cabin of the Siren, and I ain't never seen a shavin' of him since."

"He's a-layin' low somewheres, no doubt," put in Uncle Dave. "Bill's a cute one, he is, an' he don't take no more chances than he can help."

"Mighty strange thing he ain't been here, though," said Jim Riggan. "He's a man as don't care for no one, or I might think he was a-stayin' away on my account. But I know Bill better than that."

"Couldn't you find him?" asked Gilbert Dawson.

"Nary a find. If Bill Sharpe has his reasons for keepin' dark, it ain't no use tryin' to find him, because he just won't be found," said Jim Riggan.

"Well, then, we must find some one else," said Gilbert, emphatically. "It's no use letting the whole affair hinge on the presence of this Bill Sharpe, however good a man he may be."

"The boss is right," said Uncle Dave, gravely. "Jim, who else is there?"

Ere Jim Riggan could reply, there was a scratch on the outside of the door, indicating that some member of the Hoot Owls Society was seeking admission.

"There's some one. Uncle Dave, you'd better give him the countersign. There's no one else here," said Jim Riggan.

"I suppose," replied Uncle Dave, "though it's kind o' hard on a man of my age havin' to 'tend door. My old bones are all rusty with rheumatiz, and they squeak like an old-fashion d brake on a car-wheel when I have to move around much. But, that's always the way. When a man gets old, the young fellers just use him for all the hard work, as if he was an old mule in a coal mine. Gosh! my knees are bad this mornin'!"

Grumbling thus, Uncle Dave, who was really as sprightly and strong as most men of forty, made a great show of hobbling across the room.

He scratched on the inside of the door in response to the scratch on the outside, and asked for the password.

It came back in a hoarse whisper.

"The feller must have a bad cold," said Uncle Dave, with a grin, looking around. "He talks as if he had a haystack in his throat."

"Perhaps he's a hayseed," said Jim Riggan.

The individual outside, whoever he was, gave all the words and signs required, and then Uncle Dave cautiously opened the door a little way.

The person who entered was, to all appearances, an old sailor.

He wore a big, rough overcoat, with large buttons, and a tarpaulin hat, of the shape known to seafaring men as a "sou'wester."

A large, snow-white beard and mustache, that had evidently been tempest-tossed in many a stiff gale, covered a large portion of his face, while his white hair hung down from beneath his hat in a luxuriance that is so often a result of sea-breezes throughout a long life.

Though evidently an old man, he was still in possession of much of the activity of youth, and though he carried a thick, heavy, knobby stick, it was apparently more because he thought a walking-stick a necessary adjunct to a shore-going outfit than because he needed its assistance in walking.

The old gentleman walked into the room, and bestowing a nod on each of the inmates, sat down at a little distance from the three, and began fumbling in his pockets.

Uncle Dave had resumed his seat with Gilbert Dawson and Jim Riggan, and was glancing furtively at the old sailor.

"Fine morning outside," said Uncle Dave, at last.

The sailor did not answer.

"I say it is a fine morning," repeated Uncle Dave, in a louder tone.

No answer.

"Wonder if he's deaf," said Uncle Dave to his two companions. Then, raising his voice, he bel-lowed: "It's a fine morning."

"Eh?" said the old sailor, in his hoarse whisper, putting his hand to his left ear.

"Deaf as a lamp-post, just as I thought," remarked Uncle Dave.

"Who the deuce is he?" said Jim Riggan.

"I dunno. But there's lots o' Hoot Owls as I've never seen—nor you neither. As long as they have all the signs and passwords I don't care. But look, he's got a bit o' writin' in his paw," said Uncle Dave.

The old sailor handed a scrap of paper to Uncle Dave and then returned to his seat.

"Halloa! What's this?" said Uncle Dave, in some surprise, as he looked at the note.

"You ought to know what it is, when you're a-readin' it," said Jim Riggan.

"It's a letter from Bill Sharpe," went on Uncle Dave.

"Bill Sharpe?"

"Yes, he says as how this old gentleman's a safe man, an' if we want anything done, we can trust him as much as if it was Bill himself—particularly in that N. R. job."

"N. R. job," repeated Gilbert Dawson. "That means Norman Reynolds, of course."

"That's what it means," acquiesced Jim Riggan.

"But I wonder where Bill is."

"Ask the old man," suggested Uncle Dave.

"Pretty hard to make him hear, I guess; but here goes," said Jim Riggan.

It was hard to make the old sailor understand, but Jim Riggan stuck to his task manfully.

By dint of persistent questioning and much shouting, he learned that Bill Sharpe had been arrested and was now in the station-house; that the old sailor, who called himself Bob Marlin for the present, happened to pass; that he was an old friend of Bill Sharpe's, and that when he saw him under arrest he ventured to follow him to the station and offered to furnish bail for Bill, but was refused; that during the discussion Bill managed to scribble the note that he had brought with him, and that he had promised Bill to do all he could in a certain job that Bill had on hand in partnership with Jim Riggan.

"Who got him arrested?" shouted Jim Riggan, in the old sailor's ear, as the latter concluded his explanation.

"Bill said his name was Git Thar Owney," wheezed the old man.

"Curse him! Just what I thought!" said Jim Riggan. "Well, Git Thar Owney won't troube us any more, that's sure."

"Eh?" said the old sailor, with his hand to his ear.

"Nothing!" yelled Jim.

"Do you think it's safe to trust the old man?" asked Gilbert Dawson, while Bob Marlin sat with his eyes fixed on the stove, half-asleep.

A deaf man necessarily feels himself very much alone, wherever he may be.

"Oh, yes; he's all right, as long as he's got a letter from Bill Sharpe," said Uncle Dave.

"Very well; then we'd better explain the situation to him," said Dawson.

The old sailor listened attentively to the story told by Gilbert Dawson.

The narration was not exactly truthful, Norman Reynolds being represented as a wild young scapegrace, a little weak in his mind, whom his elder brother, Gilbert Dawson, was determined to send back to his parents in England.

"Where is he now?" asked the old sailor, in his wheezy whisper.

"In that room," said Dawson, pointing carelessly over his shoulder.

"Which?"

"Why, the cellar. But never mind about that. He will be all ready to start in the morning."

"I'll go with him," whispered the old man.

"Be here at nine o'clock."

"All right."

"Well, that is all, I suppose. You will take care of Mr. Reynolds in the mean time!" said Dawson to Uncle Dave.

"Certainly."

Then Gilbert Dawson took out his well-filled pocket book, at which the eyes of Uncle Dave and Jim Riggan glistened covetously, and handed several notes to each.

Then, with a nod to each, he was gone.

"Dunno but what I'd like a sleep myself," said Riggan. "What d'ye say, Uncle Dave?"

"Yes, I've been up all night. Let's go to our old room, Number 41. There's two beds. No one ever sleeps in 'em but ourselves."

"Well, I s'pose not. We are the only fellers as has a right to sleep there," returned Jim Riggan. "I guess old Bob Marlin can keep house down here, eh?"

"Yes, I guess so. 'Tend to that door, will ye, Bob? We're goin' to take a snooze for a few hours. You know the combination."

The old sailor nodded assent, and, putting his feet on the kitchen stove, resumed his interrupted doze.

"Good-night, Bob!" yelled Riggan.

But the old sailor evidently did not hear him.

"He's the deafest old rooster I ever met," said Uncle Dave with a laugh, as he and Jim Riggan made their way to a small bedroom in the third story, at the back of the house.

But at the very instant he made this remark, the old sailor in the basement, now alone, had thrown off his white wig, beard and mustache and revealed the features of Git Thar Owney.

CHAPTER XI.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

"So, I have got on the right track, after all," said Git Thar Owney, looking around the room. "Take care, Gilbert Dawson! You are getting yourself into a bad scrape. And you, too, Jim Riggan. If it wasn't for that football match, I'd take Mr. Dawson in to-day. Forgery, abduction, consorting with known thieves! Plenty of charges to hold you on, young gentleman!"

A slight noise outside the door made him resume his white wig and beard, and drop into a chair in the character of deaf old Bob Marlin.

"Thought I heard some one, but I guess it was fancy. Thought it might be Stretcher Bull. Lucky

thing for me that old Stretcher was cruising around in that yawl of his. By gracious! I thought it was all up with Git Thar Owney that time. Long Island Sound is not a nice place to dump a fellow in the middle of the night. I was pretty near gone when Stretcher Bull dragged me into his boat. He has a knack of putting in an appearance at the right time that's mighty useful to his friends!"

Thus soliloquizing, Git Thar Owney looked cautiously around the room.

"That fellow Dawson said Norman Reynolds was over there in the cellar. Now, where is the cellar?"

He found the small door before referred to, and with the aid of a small jimmy that he carried for emergencies, soon forced it open.

The iron door gave him a little more trouble, but a few minutes' work at the lock and a fumbling at the bolts was sufficient to give him ingress.

"Owney!"

"Mr. Reynolds!"

"What is the matter with you? What have they been doing to you?" asked Git Thar Owney.

Norman Reynolds was sitting on the edge of his cot-bed, with his hand to his forehead, trying to collect his scattered senses.

"I don't know, Owney," he replied. "I can't tell what is the matter with me. I am all in a dream."

"Well, we will see if we cannot wake you," said Git Thar Owney, cheerfully. "That fellow Gilbert Dawson is at the bottom of this business."

"Ah!"

"Yes, that's what he is," continued Owney. "And he has managed things pretty slick, too. But I think we shall eucher him, after all."

"Where am I?"

"Where are you, Mr. Reynolds! Why, you are in New York."

"New York?"

"Yes, sir, New York City. In the house known as the Owls' Nest, but where it won't be very healthy for the Owls to come when I get you out of here."

"I have some faint recollection of being on a steamer, and of walking down the gang plank, and being helped into a carriage," said Norman Reynolds, dreamily.

"I have a very strong recollection of the steamer, and of being thrown overboard into the bargain. Stretcher Bull, by the merest good luck, happened to be rowing along, and fished me out. I have often laughed at Stretcher for doing funny things like that, but I'll never do it again. It was the only thing that saved me from the fishes of the Sound last night."

"Owney, what did they bring me here for?"

"To make Miss Le Fevre think that you were not a square man. That fellow Gilbert Dawson forged your name and wrote a letter that he tried to make Miss Le Fevre believe was yours."

"The villain!" ejaculated young Reynolds, upon whom the name of Clarice had had a revivifying effect that could not have been attained by any other means.

"Yes, that's what he is," observed Owney.

"I will have a reckoning with him—a bitter reckoning," said Norman Reynolds, through his set teeth.

"Yes, but not until after the match," said Git Thar Owney. "Miss Le Fevre is so set on Yale winning that you can't afford to lose the services of such a good man in the field as Dawson."

"But what shall we do?"

"Leave it all to me. I'll take you out of this place right away. Then we will get back to New Haven and you can go into training for the match, and practice with your team as if nothing had happened."

"Well, but—"

"Don't say anything. I'm advising for the best."

"But, Clarice?"

"Go and see her, first thing, of course. She is anxious about you, and you must let her know you are all safe. I'll go with you and keep watch around the house while you are with her. I don't want to trust you out of my sight again until Yale has won that game and I have Gilbert Dawson under lock and key."

"Owney, you are a good boy, and I don't believe I can ever repay you."

Norman Reynolds took Git Thar Owney's hand as he spoke, and the hearty pressure showed that the two young fellows thoroughly understood each other.

Norman, with his splendid constitution, was rapidly recovering from the effects of the sickening drug under whose influence he had been kept so many hours, and since Owney had been talking with him had become almost his proper self again.

"Well, Owney, if you are going to show me the way out we may as well go. I have had all I want of this place," he said.

"Come on, then!"

But it was not to be. The iron door shut with a loud crash, and mingling with the creaking of the bolts Norman and Owney heard a peal of mocking laughter.

Owney jumped to the door and tried to force it open.

His efforts were fruitless! The iron door was locked and bolted!

On the other side stood the man who had entrapped Owney when he had not the least suspicion of the proximity of an enemy.

"I told you I'd get even, Mr. Git Thar Owney," the man was muttering, as he shook his fist at the door, "and now I think I've done it!"

The man was Bill Sharpe!

How he had managed to slip out of the hands of the police-officer was best known to himself.

Certainly he had accomplished the feat in some

way, thus enabling him to get into the Owls' Nest just in time to interfere with Git Thar Owney's plan for the escape of Norman Reynolds.

"Stay there, Git Thar Owney!" he muttered. "Stay there, my boy, as the guest of William Sharpe, Esq., owner of a six-foot estate in the East River, and a New York man of business!"

He gave vent to a loud satirical laugh, and then, passing through the other doorway into the kitchen, shut the little wooden door, and sat down by the stove in the chair so lately occupied by Git Thar Owney in the character of Bob Marlin, the old sailor.

In the mean time Git Thar Owney and Norman Reynolds were looking blankly in each other's faces.

"This is a pretty state of things," said Owney.

"But there are two of us," remarked Norman Reynolds.

Git Thar Owney looked admiringly at his companion, and said:

"That is the way I like to hear a man talk. There is no back down about you. You're right! There are two of us, and it will be a strange thing to me if we can't fight our way out of this together. Got any weapons?"

"No. I never carry any."

"Good thing, too, as a general thing. There would be fewer murderers all over the country if everybody followed your example. Well, I am a detective, and I always go armed. Here, you take this pistol. It's a self-cocking six-shooter."

Owney handed a revolver to Norman Reynolds, and the latter, after examining it critically, put it in his pocket.

"Use that only if you are obliged. I hope we shall get through without any fighting at all," said Owney.

"I should like to have one blow at that fellow, Dawson," said Norman Reynolds, clinching his fist.

"You shall have that luxury in the course of time, but not just yet."

"Have you got any weapons for yourself?" asked Norman.

Git Thar Owney held up his knotty stick and drew a loaded handy-billy from an inside pocket.

"These are enough for me," he said, "but I do not think we shall have to use anything in the way of weapons at all."

"How is that?"

"Because I believe our easiest way out of this will be through that glass over our heads."

Norman Reynolds looked up.

"But do you see that there are three stout iron bars across that glass, Owney? Before we can get at the glass we must move them out of the way."

"Leave that to me," was Owney's confident reply. "Help me with this table."

They drew the table under the glass and Owney mounted it and grasped one of the bars, shaking it violently.

The result was entirely unexpected!

A bell rung loudly in the kitchen!

Immediately there was a knocking at the iron door, and Ugly Bill Sharpe's voice cried:

"Let those bars alone. You may just as well keep quiet. The place is too well protected for you to find your way out until we want you to go. If this bell rings again I'll turn the hose on you until you are drowned out."

As an earnest that he meant what he said, Bill Sharpe sent a strong stream of water full into Git Thar Owney's face from a small opening in the iron door.

Owney staggered back from the force of the water, and Bill Sharpe, with another derisive laugh, turned the water off and went back to the kitchen.

"All right!" assured Owney. "We have learned something, anyhow. These fellows are using electricity. The first thing to do now is to find the wires that communicate with the bars and cut them."

"If you can."

"Oh, I can! I must!" was Owney's confident reply.

He mounted the table again, and, with his jack-knife, prodded at the edge of the bricks which held the bars.

"I believe I can get some of these bricks out," he said, "and then when the ends of the bars are laid bare, I can easily cut the wires."

"Good idea, Owney. I only hope it may be successful," responded Norman.

Git Thar Owney took his jimmy from his pocket and dug out one of the bricks.

A few minutes' more work and out came another.

"Just what I thought!" exclaimed Owney.

"Here are the wires. Luckily I am well supplied with tools."

A pair of bell-hangers' nippers formed part of Git Thar Owney's outfit, and with them he soon severed the six wires attached to the three bars.

"So much for them. Now for the bars!"

Owney wrenched at one of the bars, but found it much firmer than he had expected.

"Guess I must ask you to help me," he said.

"Certainly!" responded the young collegian, as he sprang on the table beside Owney.

The united efforts of the young men soon brought the bars from their place.

"Shall we break the glass?" said Norman.

"No; I do not think it would be advisable—for two reasons. One is that we could not do it with any tools we have. It is about two inches thick and as strong as iron."

"That is reason enough!" laughed Reynolds.

"But what is your other reason?"

"Well, it would very likely cut us. The space is only two feet square altogether, and we cannot afford to have any jagged points of glass running into us."

"You will take the glass out altogether, eh?"

"I will try."

It was a long and tiresome job.

They worked alternately with knife and jimmy at loosening the bed of cement in which the glass was laid.

It had to be done inch by inch, and they labored at it for hours.

No one disturbed them, though they could hear the voices of a number of men in the kitchen at intervals.

Whether Gilbert Dawson or Jim Riggan was there or not, they could not tell.

They opined not, because if they had come back and heard the turn things had taken, they would almost surely have favored Owney and Norman Reynolds with a visit.

It was quite dark when at length, in response to their united efforts, the heavy slab of glass moved a little.

"All the better," said Git Thar Owney. "I do not want the police to drop on this place yet. When things are ripe I will lead them on myself, but not just yet."

They worked at the glass for ten minutes longer, and then—found that they could lift it.

"All ready, sir?"

"All ready, Owney."

"Up she goes, then!"

"All together!"

With a steady and powerful push they removed the glass, throwing it to one side.

"You go first! I'll help you!" said Git Thar Owney.

Reynolds managed to climb up through the hole, and had his head and shoulders in the now dark street, when a hand pushed him down in a heap on top of Owney, on the table, and Jim Riggan's voice said:

"Not yet, my beauty! I was a-watchin' yer. You ain't got away yet!"

He was pulling the glass over the hole again, when a fist came like a sledge-hammer against his jaw knocking him into the gutter.

Owney had in the mean time recovered himself, and determined to make a desperate fight for liberty now that it was so nearly gained, had sprung up and was half-way out of the hole just as Jim Riggan fell in the gutter.

"Stretcher Bull, by all that's wonderful!" exclaimed Owney, as the light of the street lamp fell full on the stranger's face.

"That's what! And I've found yer just where I thought you'd be! Let me help yer out of this," said Stretcher Bull, with a delighted grin overspreading his features, as he saw that he had arrived just in time to rescue the young collegian as well as his friend Owney from an awkward predicament.

CHAPTER XII.

A FOUL BLOW.

"GOOD-MORNING!" saluted Norman Reynolds, carelessly to Gilbert Dawson, two weeks after the occurrence of the events narrated in the last chapter.

Norman was standing in a gymnasium in New York, in athletic costume, when Gilbert Dawson entered and met him face to face.

It was the first time they had met since the dastardly attempt of Dawson to ruin Norman and inveigle him into a foreign country.

Norman had made up his mind that he would not make any reference to Dawson's treachery until after the match, at all events.

He would then be guided by circumstances.

Clarice had assured Norman that she saw through Gilbert Dawson's schemes from the very first, and that nothing he could have done would have made her doubt the truth, honor and constancy of her lover.

With this assurance, Norman Reynolds was disposed to look with lenience upon the injuries he had suffered at the hands of his disappointed rival.

He had not forgiven him altogether, but he could still bring himself to speak to him.

Hence his "good-morning."

Gilbert Dawson flushed to the roots of his hair, as he looked around him as if for some means of escape.

Then, with an apparent effort, he straightened himself, and replied, with the slightest tinge of irony in his tone:

"Good-morning, Mr. Reynolds. Glad to see you looking so well."

"I'm practicing every day on the bars and trapeze. The match takes place next Wednesday. By the way, you intend to play, I suppose. I have saved your place for you on the chance of your coming back to New Haven in time. No one had seen you for two weeks, but I felt certain that you would be back to kick the ball for the sake of old Yale."

"You were mistaken, then. Business of a private nature will not allow me to play. I must ask you to get some one in my place," replied Gilbert Dawson, stiffly.

He did not know exactly what to make of the good-humored manner of one he had so deeply wronged—in intention, if not in actual fact.

"Well, I have some one as a substitute, though I should have preferred you. The man I have is not a college man, but I have the permission of both the Yale and Oxbridge fellows to use him," said Norman Reynolds.

"Who is he?"

"They call him Git Thar Owney, and he is an excellent player."

Gilbert Dawson ground his teeth.

"What is this—Git Thar Owney?" he asked.

"He is a detective, but he is also an athlete, who has made a record in several branches of sport, particularly as an oarsman."

"Shouldn't have thought the Britishers would have let you use a man like that in an international match."

"They did not raise any objection, only asking whether he was a native American. My reply that he was quite satisfied them. They feel that this match is to be a test of the comparative strength, agility and skill of England and America."

"Well, I will not detain you. I presume you want to practice."

"Yes, I was just cooling off a little, that's all," said Norman Reynolds, as he strolled away.

"I wish I could cut one of those ropes," muttered Gilbert Dawson, as he watched his rival mount a trapeze and perform a number of evolutions with the ease of an athlete in perfect condition.

He stood looking at Norman for a few minutes, and then, as if an idea had just struck him, went into a dressing-room and donned the loose flannel trousers, flannel shirt and cap usually worn in gymnasiums.

Gilbert Dawson was a splendidly built young man.

His limbs and body were in perfect proportion, and his movements had the supple grace of a gladiator of ancient Rome.

As he walked across the smooth polished floor of the gymnasium he appeared to be glorying in his strength.

He seized a pair of heavy dumb-bells and raised them slowly until he held them at arm's length.

Not a tremor could be discerned in his arms or wrists as his muscles responded to the strain put upon them.

They were as steady as if carved in marble.

Slowly he elevated the dumb-bells, with arms stiffly extended, until they were straight up over his head.

He held them in that position for a few seconds, and then let them drop slowly backward until they touched his back.

He was now in a position where nothing but extraordinary strength could keep the ponderous dumb-bells steady.

But Gilbert Dawson's strength was extraordinary, and the dumb-bells obeyed his will without escaping his control for an instant.

Several men who had been practicing on the different gymnastic contrivances stood watching Gilbert Dawson as he deftly handled the two masses of iron.

They had all handled these particular dumb-bells, at different times, and they knew what it meant to hold them out at arm's length without any sign of distress.

The dumb-bells weighed thirty-five pounds apiece. In the meantime Norman Reynolds was exercising on the trapeze without noticing particularly what was going on below him.

He dropped gracefully to the floor from the trapeze just as Gilbert Dawson put the dumb-bells down.

"What did you think of that dumb-bell practice, Norman," said one. "Can you raise those thirty-five pounders, touch your back and bring them back again without trembling, do you think?"

"I don't know," returned Norman, modestly. "I don't generally use such heavy bells. Unless a man is in first-class condition they will do him more harm than good."

"But you *are* in first-class condition are you not?" asked Gilbert Dawson, with a sneer.

"I don't know but what I will try what I can do with the dumb-bells," said Norman Reynolds, as he stooped to pick them up.

Gilbert Dawson watched him closely as he grasped the ponderous implements and slowly raised them.

"I should just like to see him break down in that feat," thought Gilbert Dawson, as his vengeful eyes followed every movement of his hated, but successful, rival.

But Norman Reynolds did not break down.

He was in as good physical condition as Gilbert Dawson.

He lifted the dumb-bells and went through the evolutions as neatly as had Gilbert Dawson.

"Well done!" chorused the bystanders. "Norman, you did that well."

"What do you say to a set-to with the gloves for points?" asked Gilbert Dawson.

Norman Reynolds knew perfectly well why his rival had challenged him, and he made up his mind that he would teach Gilbert Dawson a lesson in pugilistic skill as well as in good manners.

Gilbert Dawson was anxious to lower Norman Reynolds in the estimation of his friends if possible.

The reputation Norman had achieved as an athlete was gall and wormwood to Gilbert Dawson, and if he could only lay his rival low in the most manly of all athletic sports—boxing—he felt that it would give him more satisfaction than anything else save the accomplishment of that which he knew now was hopeless—the securing of Clarice Le Fevre for his bride.

"I will put on the gloves with you, Mr. Dawson if you like," said Norman Reynolds, "though I am somewhat out of practice."

"So am I," returned Gilbert Dawson, as he picked up a set of gloves lying on a shelf and passed them to Norman Reynolds, to allow the latter to select those he desired to wear.

The two young men put on the gloves and faced each other.

"I'll be timekeeper," said a bright little fellow, with a boyish face sparkling with fun.

"Very well, Fitch, I'm agreeable, if it suits Mr. Dawson."

"I am satisfied," grunted Gilbert.

"Shake hands!" commanded Fitch.

The two men shook hands gravely and walked back to their respective corners of the square ring

that had been hastily formed with benches by the eager bystanders.

"Time!" said Fitch, and the combatants walked forward, cautiously, with their hands up in the most approved professional style.

"Norman has a very pretty guard," said Fitch to a friend at his side, "but I don't know whether it is any better than the other man's."

"They are both good boxers, evidently," was the cautious reply.

Gilbert Dawson and Norman were walking around each other, warily sparring for an opening.

Dawson's teeth were set firmly, his brows were contracted, and his whole countenance showed determination and vindictiveness.

Norman Reynolds, on the other hand, was the personification of good temper.

He knew that one of the first rules of boxing was to keep in a pleasant humor, and above all, not to get excited.

He was as determined as his opponent to get the best of the contest, but he felt that if by chance he were beaten he would still be able to enjoy his dinner and to sleep peacefully at night.

Gilbert Dawson made several feints in the hope of catching his opponent off his guard, but Norman was too wary to be taken at a disadvantage.

He met every false movement with a defensive attitude that showed how thoroughly he was prepared for any line of attack.

At last, in attempting to draw on his antagonist, Gilbert Dawson, for a second, left his face unprotected.

Norman Reynolds's right hand flew out like a cannon-ball and the glove just tapped Dawson on the end of the nose.

With a cry of rage that he could not suppress, Gilbert Dawson flew at Norman and tried to bear him down by sheer weight and impetuosity.

Norman nimbly stepped aside and bestowed two more light taps on Dawson's nose and chin.

Mad with vexation, Gilbert Dawson yelled at the top of his voice.

"Confound your taps! Why don't you strike hard like a man? I'm sick of this child's play!"

"All right," returned Norman Reynolds, with his undisturbed smile. "I'll try and oblige you."

The next minute Gilbert Dawson went staggering back over the bench under a well-directed blow from Norman Reynolds's mighty right hand, delivered with all his force.

"Go to your corners," commanded Fitch. "That's the end of the round. First knock down blow to Mr. Reynolds."

Dawson sat on the bench opposite his antagonist, and took his right glove off, as if to rest his hand.

He played with the glove while waiting for the call of "Time."

"Time!" cried Fitch, and the two young men faced each other again.

Gilbert Dawson evidently nettled by his experience in the previous round, was much more careful than before.

He did not spar so viciously, and hence was not so careless.

There were several light blows given and returned, and for the first minute the "honors were easy," to use a strictly sporting expression.

Then Norman Reynolds saw an opening and gave his opponent one of his exasperating light taps on the nose.

He could not get away without a return, as he had in the first round.

Dawson, who had evidently left himself open to this light tap on purpose, gathered himself up as soon as the blow on his nose was delivered, and lunged straight at Norman Reynolds's cheek.

He struck him just below the eye, and Norman fell at full length unconscious, with the blood pouring from his face.

"Guess he got all he wanted that time," said Gilbert Dawson, coolly, as he looked at his prostrate victim.

He was turning to walk away, when a seedy man, with a plug hat, broke through the bystanders, and knelt by the side of Norman Reynolds.

"Just as I thought," cried the seedy man. "A foul, of the worst kind!"

"What's that?" shouted Gilbert Dawson, in a savage tone.

"I say it's a foul!" returned the seedy man, undaunted. "Look at his glove and see if I don't speak the truth."

Fitch and two or three others pulled Dawson's glove from his right hand and examined it closely.

"Well?" said the seedy man, interrogatively.

"It was a foul!" proclaimed Fitch. "Look at this glove. The padding has been pulled away from the knuckles, and here are two silver dollars imbedded in the horse-hair in such a position that when a blow was given the edge of the coins would strike through the glove. It is the worst thing I ever saw, and the man who would do a thing like that should be tarred and feathered."

"Where is he?" asked a dozen voices.

But Gilbert Dawson had gone.

He knew that his contemptible trick had been discovered, and had sought safety in flight.

"What's the matter?" asked Norman Reynolds, who recovered consciousness. "Wasn't that a very hard blow?"

"It was too hard to have been given by an honest man, but I'll make him pay for it yet. He has a long score to settle with Git Thar Owey."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE KIND OF HONOR FOUND AMONG ROGUES.

The morning of the day on which the great football match between Yale and Oxbridge was to take place broke clear and beautiful.

Expectation was on tiptoe, and the only talk in New Haven was about the game and what the chances were of the Englishmen giving the home "eleven" any trouble at all.

Norman Reynolds sat in his own room in the college building.

The young man was negligently attired in dressing-gown and slippers, and was deep in thought.

He had not heard or seen anything of Gilbert Dawson since the day when the latter struck him so foully in the New York gymnasium.

"He is a vindictive fellow," thought Norman; "but I think that was the last time he will ever attempt to injure me. I fancy Mr. Gilbert Dawson will hardly dare to show himself in this city again. After to-day's match there will be nothing to restrain me from giving him up to justice, and he has surely committed crimes enough to send him to State Prison."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Norman.

"Here's a letter for you, Reynolds. A fellow brought it to my room by mistake," said the young man before referred to whose room was next to that of Norman Reynolds.

"What kind of fellow was he?" asked Norman, carelessly, as he took the letter.

"Well, to tell you the truth, he was not a very prepossessing gentleman. He looked like a 'long-shoreman' or something of that kind."

Norman Reynolds, who had asked the question hardly thinking what he was saying, was opening the letter.

It contained but five words:

"Clarice Le Fevre is in danger."

That was all.

There was no signature, date or direction.

It was an anonymous letter in the fullest sense of the term.

Norman Reynolds read and re-read the warning words with a puzzled expression.

Then he hastily threw off his dressing gown and in five minutes was dressed and on his way to Clarice Le Fevre's house.

As he drew near to her residence he looked eagerly at it to see if there were any unusual signs of trouble about it.

No. Everything looked the same as at any other time, and as far as he could see there was nothing to threaten his betrothed there.

In answer to his ring at the bell Bridget Maloney came to the door, looking decidedly worried and disheveled.

"What is the matter?" asked Norman, hurriedly.

"Shure, there was a mon coom here wid a wild luk on the face uv him, an' said as Mister Le Fevre, in Noo York is sick, an' Miss Clarice she wint wid the mon to the daypo roight away."

Without answering Norman Reynolds turned and sped away toward the depot.

More than one of his acquaintances, who saw him walking at the top of his speed, looked wonderingly at him, but he did not notice them.

His object was only to get to the depot before the next Express left for New York City.

He feared he knew not exactly what, but he knew that Gilbert Dawson was again at work, trying to bring trouble upon the girl for whom Norman Reynolds would gladly have laid down his life.

In the mean time, where was Clarice?

A man whom she had never seen before, but whom the reader knows as Jim Riggan, had called with the message that her father who had been in New York for the last few days on business, and whom she expected home by noon, in time to witness the match, had met with an accident of some kind, and was even then lying in a dangerous condition at the Grand Central Hotel in the metropolis.

"There is a train starts in half an hour," he said, "and the hotel people told me to bring you back with me."

Without questioning the man's sincerity, Clarice hastily threw on her wrap and hat, and accompanied him to a closed carriage that was standing at the front gate.

"This way. There you are!" said Jim Riggan, as he helped Clarice into the carriage, shut the door with a bang, and mounting to the driver's seat, drove rapidly away.

The blinds of the carriage were tightly drawn down, and it was nearly a minute before Clarice's eyes became accustomed to the gloom sufficiently to enable her to see that she was not alone.

She could just distinguish a man's figure sitting in the opposite corner of the carriage.

"What was the nature of the accident to my father?" she asked, after waiting to see whether her mysterious companion intended to speak.

No answer.

"Perhaps he is deaf," thought Clarice. Then, aloud:

"Do you come from New York? Is my father very seriously injured?"

The stranger stirred, as if arousing himself from a reverie, and answered, in a low, subdued voice, that sounded almost unearthly through the rumble of the wheels:

"He is fatally hurt."

"Oh!" screamed Clarice, "don't say that!"

She buried her face in her hands and sobbed violently.

"Oh! this is terrible—terrible!" she wailed. "Oh, my poor father!"

The mysterious stranger sat quietly looking at her when she gave way to her first outburst of grief. Then, as she continued to sob, he put out his hand and grasped her wrist.

She started, and tried to draw her hand away.

He held it firmly.

"Listen!" he whispered.

As he spoke, an indefinable feeling of dread coursed through Clarice's heart.

Did she know that voice, or was it only a horrible suspicion?

"Listen!" he repeated.

Yes; no doubt about it now! She did indeed know who was her companion.

"Clarice," went on the stranger, "do not give way to your grief. Remember that you always have one friend, who, however much you may have been led to look with doubt upon him, is still truer than others who have somehow gained your confidence."

Clarice hardly heard what he said. She was trying to think out some plan for escaping from the carriage.

But when the man before her dared to cast a reflection upon her lover she could contain herself no longer.

"Wretch!" she said, indignantly. "I know you, Gilbert Dawson, and I know too well how utterly unscrupulous and wicked you are. What your object is in entrapping me into the carriage I do not know, but I do know that I do not fear you. We are in the middle of an American city, and I am no more in your power now than if I were safe in my father's parlor, and you, where you should be—in a prison cell."

Gilbert Dawson winced under these bitter words, which he knew in his heart were true.

"I'll show you presently whether you are in my power," he said, savagely. "If it is any satisfaction to you, I don't mind telling you that your father is all right, for anything I know."

"Thank Heaven for that!" said Clarice, fervently.

"Yes, I knew you would be glad to hear that," said Gilbert. "See how thoughtful I am. If I hadn't made you believe that he was dying you could never have experienced the delight of knowing that he is quite well."

"Villain!"

"Precisely. You seem determined to be uncompromising this morning, but this does not trouble me very much under the circumstances, seeing that I hold the winning cards in this particular game."

"What do you want with me?"

"I'll tell you in a very few words. You know I love you with all my heart."

Clarice Le Fevre made a gesture of contempt.

"Oh, of course you think—or pretend you think—that no one but Norman Reynolds could love you."

"Go on with your remarks. I do not wish to discuss the subject of love with you," said Clarice.

"Perhaps not; but love is the mainspring of your present adventure, and I must request you to listen."

"Go on, then."

"We are now out of the city, and traveling along a road where we are hardly likely to meet many people. So if you were to scream, it would not do you much good."

"Well?"

"I am going to keep you out of sight for a few days, just to revenge myself on Norman Reynolds and on you."

"What do you mean?"

"Some distance out on this road which we are now traveling, there is a house in which lives an old woman—a respectable old lady, who makes a living by selling cabbages, potatoes and other vegetables raised on her bit of land—who will do anything for me, provided I pay her."

"I don't understand you."

"Have patience. You will understand me before I get through. I am going to take you to that house and give you into the old lady's care. She has a garret with iron bars across the window, and a strong door with good locks and bolts."

Clarice shrank in horror.

She began to realize what a thoroughly desperate villain Gilbert Dawson was.

"The old lady will keep you about a week, and during that time you will be as completely shut off from the world as if you were in your grave. I have already sent a messenger to Norman Reynolds with a note purporting to come from you, saying that you have eloped with me, whom you have secretly loved all the time, and that before any one can find us we shall be married. How do you like that idea, Clarice?"

"Wretch!"

"Yes. Then you know what the result will be. Norman Reynolds will be so upset he will not be fit for anything. He will not feel able to play in the match this afternoon, and even if, from a Quixotic sense of duty, he should do so, he will surely play so badly that Yale will be beaten; and you know you told him he must lead Yale to victory, if he ever desired to lead you to the altar."

"And do you think he will believe such a story?"

"Yes, if it is in your handwriting—which it will be. But that is not all. A certain picture of yourself, which he promised should never go out of his possession, fell into my hands. That picture is inclosed in your note. In reference to it, you say that the gentleman who is now your husband (that is me) gave you the picture, which Mr. Reynolds had so unaccountably lost, and that you sent it to him as a reminder of the little faith you could ever put in his promises. There, what do you think of all that?" concluded Gilbert Dawson, with a harsh laugh of diabolical malice.

"That your scheme will fail, because I will have my liberty now!" cried Clarice.

She sent her elbow crashing through the glass window of the carriage, but the heavy, thick blind pulled down and fastened inside, preventing her seeing through.

"Fool!" hissed Gilbert Dawson, as he sprung on the girl and placed his hand on her mouth.

She struggled desperately to free herself, but Gilbert Dawson's tremendous strength was irresistible.

"Let me go!" gasped Clarice.

Gilbert Dawson removed his hand and returned to his seat with a short laugh.

"Oh, very well! Excite yourself if you like. We are out in the country now, and I don't know why I should prevent you screaming and making a fool of yourself if you want to do so. But you need not make so much fuss. No one will hurt you. The old lady will give you plenty to eat and drink while you stay with her, and will let you go unharmed at the end of a week. By that time I shall be far away. I shall go back in this carriage as soon as I see you safely locked in the garret. Norman Reynolds will be lost to you forever, and Gilbert Dawson will have shown him and you that he is not to be trifled with."

Clarice did not answer.

She felt that her situation was desperate, but she determined not to despair.

"I wonder whereabouts we are, by the way," said Gilbert Dawson. "We should be nearly at the old lady's house by this time."

He cautiously unfastened and raised the window-blind a little way on his own side of the carriage as he spoke.

Then he uttered a fearful oath.

Clarice started in astonishment.

Gilbert Dawson was pulling the check-string violently.

The carriage stopped.

Gilbert burst open the door, and—

Found himself in the grasp of Norman Reynolds and Git Thar Owney.

Gilbert Dawson struggled with all his might, but Norman Reynolds and Git Thar Owney were each as powerful as he was, and the two controlled him easily.

In a second Gilbert Dawson was handcuffed and looking the picture of baffled villainy.

"You blackguard!" he shouted, to Jim Riggan, who, with the reins and whip in his hand, was looking down with a grin from the driver's seat.

"Where have you brought us?"

The carriage was standing outside the railroad depot almost in the heart of the city.

"Oh, don't get riled, Mr. Dawson, 'cause it won't help you any. I seen that it was gettin' kind o' dangerous to work for you any more, an' I just give the whole snap away, that's all. I'm goin' to turn State's evidence on you and Bill Sharpe, d'ye see? That old woman out the road will be a-waitin', won't she? You ought ter have looked out o' the window to see which way I was a-drivin' yer."

Gilbert Dawson made a motion as if he would have sprung up to Jim Riggan and brained him with his hand, but Git Thar Owney held him back.

"No, Mr. Dawson; keep still. We don't want any more exhibitions of pugilism from you. You are too fond of putting in fouls," said Owney, significantly.

In the mean time Norman Reynolds was fanning Clarice, who had fainted as soon as she heard the voices of friends.

"How did it all happen?" was the first question she asked when she recovered consciousness.

"Simple enough," said Git Thar Owney. "Jim Riggan told me about the scheme, so I kept the carriage in sight. I wasn't in time to stop it at the house, but I told Riggan to drive to the depot when he had got Dawson to think everything was all right."

Then I brought the message to you, Mr. Reynolds, and ran away at once, because I did not know exactly whether Riggan was to be trusted. I knew that you would find us anyhow. I wanted to catch Dawson red-handed, as it were."

"I will pay you back for this yet," hissed Gilbert Dawson.

"Don't think you'll have a chance for about ten years," said Owney. "The penalty for forgery is pretty heavy in Connecticut."

"Then you were the messenger that brought me the warning note, 'h, Owey?'" asked Norman Reynolds. "They told me it was some one who looked like a 'longshoreman.'"

"Yes, I 'make up' for a good many characters at different times," said Owey. "Get in that carriage!" he continued to Gilbert Dawson. "And Riggan, drive us to the police station. I want to get this fellow safe in a cell as soon as possible."

"All right," said Jim Riggan, adding, *sotto voce*: "It is not often that I go to a police station of my own free will, but I guess I'm all safe this time. I gave away the gang just in time, I believe."

As the carriage, with Gilbert Dawson and Git Thar Owney inside, and Jim Riggan in the driver's seat, drove away, Owey called out of the window:

"Mr. Reynolds, take that young lady home and then go to your room and lie down. The Oxbridge fellows are in town, and they are telling everybody that they are going to lick Yale out of its boots at the football game this afternoon."

"We shall see," laughed Norman Reynolds.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GREAT FOOTBALL MATCH.

On the large ball-ground of Yale College, thousands of spectators were gathered to witness the great international football match between the representative players of England from Oxbridge University, and the eleven of Yale.

As is usual at college athletic contests, the crowd was made up very largely of ladies.

Not only did New Haven contribute her fairest daughters to grace the occasion, but surrounding cities within an area of hundreds of miles, sent delegations to report afterward how Yale bore herself in the great struggle.

From New York City there were many representative citizens, together with the ladies of their families, all bearing the unmistakable stamp of "style" that is never reached to perfection save in the metropolis.

But though the ladies made up a large proportion of the total assemblage, there were quite enough of the masculine gender to sustain the national reputation for love of field-sports.

The college turned out its students *en masse*. "Sophs," freshmen and professors for the nonce met on common ground, and all were eagerly discussing the chance of Yale getting the deciding goal that should win them the international championship.

As everybody knows, the game of football is played by two elevens, and the object of the game is to kick or throw the ball over a bar between two posts, something like the letter H.

Each side guards its own goal, and the ball will often be thrown around between the two goals for hours without either side gaining any advantage.

The ball is egg-shaped, and hence it is very difficult to kick it exactly straight.

The ball must always be kicked from one of its oblong ends to insure anything like an effective movement.

The goals had been put up, at carefully measured distances, and white lines on the grass marked the boundaries within which the ball must remain to be "in play."

It was a beautiful afternoon, with a warm breeze blowing across the field that just stirred the fluttering feathers and ribbons of the gayly-trimmed bonnets of the ladies without chilling the blood of those who had come to sit in the open air until the great match should be decided.

It was to be a full game, of two innings, forty-five minutes each, with a quarter of an hour's rest between them.

The side having the greatest number of goals at the end of the time would, of course, be the winner.

The spectators were seated on platforms that had been built specially for the occasion, while a good many who could not find room there lounged around the field, but at a respectful distance from the boundary lines.

Clarice Le Fevre, with her father—a handsome gentleman of fifty, who had come home on the noon train from New York—sat in a good position on the platform, where she could see every movement of the game.

"Oh, papa, I do hope Yale will win. I don't know what I shall do if they don't beat the Englishmen."

"Put up with it, I guess, my daughter, and hope for better fortune next time, I expect, my daughter, eh?" said her father, with a smile, adding: "There are the Oxbridge men, just coming on the field. Fine-looking fellows they are, too."

Clarice was obliged to acknowledge the justice of her father's praise.

The young Englishmen, in their white flannel trousers and shirts, with blue caps, looked very well, and as they carelessly strolled on the field and bowed in response to the cheers generously bestowed by the audience, more than one friend of Yale felt that the home team would have to do their very best work to beat these active and powerful young men from over the sea.

The hearty applause that greeted the Oxbridge eleven had hardly died away when it broke out into a thunderous roar that proclaimed the appearance of Yale.

The team walked forward, and Norman Reynolds, captain of Yale, removed his red, white and blue cap with his left hand, while he placed his right in that of Basil Brooke, captain of Oxbridge.

It was to be a friendly contest, and in proof of it the two sides, in the presence of their captains, shook hands.

The costume of the Yales was white knee-breeches and blue stockings, blue shirts, trimmed with red, and caps of all the national colors combined.

They were thus easily distinguished from the Englishmen.

Clarice looked proudly at Norman Reynolds, and thought what a fine-looking fellow he was.

Next to him, in point of manly beauty, she conceded the palm to Git Thar Owey, who in full Yale uniform, stood just behind Norman.

The toss for "kick-off" resulted in favor of the Oxbridge team.

The two captains at once proceeded to place their men.

The ball was first placed in the center of the ground between the two goals. Then the "rushers" on each side—that is the men who were expected to do most of the scrimmaging, when the ball should have been set in motion—were placed a little way back. Behind the "rushers" were the "backs," "half backs," and "goal." These latter were simply expected to protect the positions they held, and not allow the ball to pass them.

"All ready?" asked Brooke.

"All ready!" returned Reynolds.

Basil Brooke walked slowly to the middle of the field, and carefully placed the ball until its position exactly suited him.

Not a sound was to be heard in the field save the soft breathing of the players as they waited for the time when they should be allowed to rush for the ball.

Every one felt that it was an important moment.

Basil Brooke having arranged the ball, walked back a few steps, and looked calmly before him, over the heads of the Yale men, straight at the goal toward which it was his intention to send the ball as far as possible.

Then he glanced quietly and confidently at the spectators, as if perfectly assured that the result of his kick would be satisfactory.

"He's a long time making up his mind," grumbled one of the younger players behind Norman Reynolds.

Norman held up his hand as a request for silence, and Owney whispered:

"All the more reason for us to be watchful. That Englishman means mischief!"

Suddenly, with a quick run, Basil Brooke raised his right foot, and striking the ball fairly and squarely on the end, sent it flying over the heads of the "rushers" straight into the arms of one of the "half-backs," knocking him flat on his back and then bounding away.

It was a splendid kick!

Before the young fellow who had stopped the ball was on his feet, the "rushers" on both sides had borne down on the egg-shaped combination of rubber and leather that was for the time the hero of the hour.

Owney had secured the ball and, with it in his arms, ran with all his might toward the Oxbridge goal.

The "rushers" all came toward him in a wild charge. He tried to dodge them, but it was of no use. They clasped him round the waist, the neck, the arms, and tried to pull the ball away from him.

He clung to the precious ball with all his strength, but the enemy was too much for him.

Glancing over his shoulder, he saw that Norman Reynolds was a little to his left, behind him, and if he had the ball, might possibly be able to carry it around the end of the line of Oxbridge "rushers."

He tossed the ball back to Norman, who caught it and ran with all the speed he could past the end of the line.

But the Oxbridge men were prepared for this maneuver, and had stationed two of their best men to intercept Norman.

The consequence was that he soon found himself in the center of a mob of rushing players, all harassing him in every way known to the devotees of the game.

Norman tugged and fought bravely, striving to advance toward the enemy's goal, if only a foot at a time.

Every foot counts in the game of football.

At last he became conscious that he could not hold the ball much longer.

He must give it up or—fall down.

Strange as it may seem to those not conversant with the rules of the game, his opponents did their utmost to prevent his falling down.

They knew that it would give him a decided advantage if he could get down to the ground.

Norman Reynolds knew it, too, and he was determined to fall.

Tearing himself away, he threw himself flat, with the ball beneath him and a mass of writhing, wriggling young men on his back.

"Down!" cried Norman and the other players got off his back.

Norman slowly arose, keeping a finger on the ball all the time, however. If he should release it for a second, his watchful opponents would snatch it away from him, but as long as he was touching it, the ball was his own.

He stood up and put his right foot on the ball, half a dozen Oxbridge men stooping over it, ready to snatch it away in case his foot slipped off.

Behind him knelt Owney.

Norman hesitated a moment, to get his breath, and then, with a dexterous movement rolled the ball back to Git Thar.

The rules of the game will not allow the ball to be passed forward toward the enemy's goal. It must only be kicked or carried in that direction.

Owney quickly passed it to another Yale man behind him, who tried to run with it toward the Oxbridge goal.

The Yale man was the young fellow who had expressed impatience on account of Basil Brooke's deliberation in "kicking off."

The young fellow was the least experienced of his side, and he soon found that playing against the crack English football team was no child's play.

Before he knew where he was, he found himself in the midst of the Oxbridge "rushers," and they made it very warm for him.

He struggled manfully to protect the ball, but his efforts were all in vain.

The spheroid was snatched from him, and before any of his own side could come to his aid, Basil Brooke, with a tremendous kick, had sent the ball over the Yale goal.

"First goal to Oxbridge!" shouted the umpire.

There was some cheering in honor of Basil Brooke's really brilliant play, but it could easily be seen that the spectators were bitterly disappointed over the temporary success of the British eleven.

"Papa, what do you think of it?" asked Clarice, earnestly. "It would be dreadful if Yale was to be beaten."

"My child," returned her father, "Yale is not beaten. That is only one goal. Look at Norman Reynolds. Can't you see that he means to thrash the Britishers, and that he has let them get the only goal he means them to have?"

"I believe you are right, papa. Norman just smiled at me, and Owney is looking this way, too. Yes, I haven't any fear of the result, after all!" replied Clarice.

This time the "kick off" was to be done by Yale.

"Owney, I got a little shaken in that scrimmage. Those fellows fell on me very heavily. Will you kick off the ball?" asked Norman Reynolds.

"Yes, if you like," replied Git Thar Owney.

"Though I don't suppose I can do it as well as you."

"You will do it much better," returned Norman.

Without another word, Owney stepped forward to

where the ball was already placed, between the opposing lines.

The Oxbridge men were smilingly confident.

Their success in getting the first goal had raised their spirits wonderfully.

"All right, grin away!" muttered Owney. "We will see if we can't make you grin on the other side of your mouths this time."

He ran at the ball and kicked it over the heads of the Oxbridge "rushers."

It was fully as good a "kick off" as Brooke's, and, fortunately for Yale, it was not stopped by a "half-back."

The ball thus went several feet nearer to the Oxbridge goal than Brooke's "kick off" had sent it to that of Yale.

The Oxbridge "rushers" were after the ball in a body.

One of them picked it up and dashed toward Yale.

"Rah for Yale!" yelled Owney, as he tore the ball from the grasp of the Englishman and ran like the wind toward the enemy's goal.

His cry was taken up by the Yale boys, both players and spectators, and the well-known wild college yell rung out over the field.

The Englishman charged on the New Yorker like a regiment of cavalry, but without avail.

He was holding the ball, and he had made up his mind that the enemy should never get it until he had scored a goal for Yale.

Basil Brooke met him when within a hundred yards of the goal, and, with set teeth, came at Owney like a cyclone.

There was a brief struggle, then Owney, with a dexterous twist of his foot, tripped his antagonist and dashed on triumphantly, with the ball still in his arms!

"Bravo! Owney! Bravo!" shouted Norman Reynolds.

The words were re-echoed by the spectators, and "Bravo, Owney!" could be heard from every side.

But, Brooke was up and after him again.

Innumerable as he was with the ball, Owney could not run at the top of his speed, and seeing that the Englishman was gaining on him rapidly, he suddenly dropped the ball, and, exerting all his strength, kicked it clean over the Oxbridge goal!

"Well done, Yale! Well done, Owney!" was the shout that went up from thousands of throats.

"Clarice, do you feel more hopeful now?" asked Mr. Le Fevre.

"Yes, father; Yale will win, I am sure, and thanks to Owney."

The success of Yale was repeated again and again throughout the afternoon; and when, at last, the umpire called "Time!" Yale had four goals to Oxbridge's one.

The great international football game had resulted in favor of America, and Yale College had proved itself worthy to uphold the credit of the nation in one of the most manly sports known to the present age.

"But, Git Thar Owney is deserving of as much credit as all the rest of the team put together," declared Norman to Clarice, as he stood talking to her and Mr. Le Fevre at the end of the match.

"Indeed he does. What a splendid play he made for that first goal Yale got," said Clarice, enthusiastically.

CHAPTER XV.

JIM RIGGAN MEETS BILL SHARPE—CONCLUSION.

"WHAT do you say, Owney? You are not going to New York to-night, surely?" asked Norman Reynolds, as Owney stood before him in his room in the college building.

"Yes, I have let those fellows alone too long already. But I made up my mind to help you through with this match first."

"You are going to break up the Hoot Owl gang, then, are you, Owney?"

"Yes, they are the game for my gun, now."

"Have you plenty of evidence?"

"Plenty; always have against such truck; but, all the same, Reynolds, I want your assistance."

"Mine?"

"Yes. You will not refuse me?"

Young Reynolds, who had been lying back at his ease in his rocking-chair, stood up and looked Git Thar Owney squarely in the face.

"Git Thar Owney," he said, "what have I ever done that you should think it necessary to ask that question? Do you think that Norman Reynolds is the man to forget what he owes to one who has stood by him as you have? I am ready to go now."

Owney took the hand extended and wrung it heartily.

"Mr. Reynolds, I don't know that I deserve all the praise you give me, but I do want you to go with me, for several reasons."

"I am ready."

"Well, Jim Riggan is waiting outside. The gang do not know yet that he has turned informer. It would not be safe for him to go to Owls' Nest, if they did."

"Call him in. I should like to have one good look at him," said Norman Reynolds.

"Jim!" called Git Thar Owney, outside the door.

"Halloa!" returned a gruff voice, and Jim Riggan followed his voice into the room.

"Well, my friend," said Norman Reynolds, as he looked smilingly into the averted face of Riggan, it seems a pity that you didn't get that silver vase of mine, after all, doesn't it?"

"That's all right, captain! You needn't be too hard on a fellow when he's a-tryin' to do the square thing. I'm glad I didn't get that vase, and I don't mean to do nothin' dishonest no more. I'm goin' to foller the river for a livin' 'cause it's the only biz-

ness I know, but no more rope or junk thievin' for me, if I knows it."

"I hope you mean what you say," said Norman Reynolds.

"You bet I do," returned Jim Riggan. "If you knew how often Bill Sharpe had played dirt on me you wouldn't doubt it. And as for that there Gilbert Dawson, he's the worst kind of a sneak."

"Well, he won't bother you any more; you can rest assured of that," assured Owney. "I'll put him through in a hurry when I get through with the Hoot Owls."

Once more the scene shifts to the Owls' Nest in the dark street in New York on the East Side.

In the kitchen are only two persons—Uncle Dave and Bill Sharpe.

"But how was it, Bill?" Uncle Dave was saying. "How did you manage to let them get out? I never saw such a thing. And it's a mercy that the police didn't get onto the racket and clean us out altogether. Howsoever, it's so long ago now, that I guess there's no danger."

"Dunno about that. I ain't seen Jim Riggan since that night, and I dunno where's he's been a-hidin' himself, but it just shows that he doesn't let folks know where he is."

"Why, I guess he's a-workin' on that there Dawson job," said Uncle Dave, as he spit musingly on the stove.

"You ain't seen nothin' of him since, either, have you?" asked Bill.

"No, but then he may be at New Haven. I s'pose he is. He is a Yale student, an' that's where he would most likely be. Unless he's gone home to San Francisco, where his father is a rich banker, they say. But that ain't likely. Why should he go? No one saw him in this, Norman Reynolds; an' they couldn't prove nothin' on him if they had."

"Well, the whole thing's a mystery to me. I know one thing. I'd like to get my claws just once on Git Thar Owney!"

"Hallo! there's some one at the door!" said Uncle Dave.

"Who is it, do you think?" said Bill Sharpe, in a low voice.

"How should I know? One of the boys, I guess. What makes you so white around the gills? You look as if you were scared. There's nothing unusual in people coming to the Nest, is there?" said Uncle Dave, somewhat indignantly.

"No, of course not, but I feel kind of nervous these days. Open the door, Uncle Dave."

"Open it yourself. There! He's scratching again, whoever it is."

Bill Sharpe, with a very discontented scowl, went to the door and commenced the palaver that always preceded the entrance of any one into the sacred precincts of the Hoot Owls' Nest.

All the answers and signs were satisfactorily given and Bill Sharpe commenced to undo the bolts and locks of the door.

"Good joke if it happened to be Git Thar Owney on the outside, eh?" suggested Uncle Dave, with a chuckle.

"I'd give ten dollars to meet him now!" growled Bill Sharpe, as he opened the door.

"You can meet him for nothing!" responded a voice, and Bill Sharpe fell back on the floor with Git Thar Owney on his chest.

"D'y'e want to see me very badly?" asked Owney, sarcastically.

"Yes, curse you!" yelled Sharpe in a fury, as he drew a dirk knife and aimed a desperate stab at Git Thar's breast.

Owney had on a thick coat, and he drew aside, so that the knife entered the cloth sideways, only just grazing the skin.

Had Owney not moved very suddenly he would assuredly have ended his career at that moment.

Bill Sharpe was not overcome yet, however.

In spite of Owney's knee on his chest, and Owney's grasp on his right wrist, he managed to draw his knife and make a plunge at Owney.

"Here, quit that!" cried another voice. "Can't stand no such business as that!" and the new-comer snatched the knife from Bill Sharpe's hand and threw it across the floor.

"Oh, no; don't do that!" exclaimed Norman Reynolds, who had been standing in the doorway as he now came forward.

Uncle Dave had picked up the knife and was creeping stealthily toward Owney when Norman presented a revolver at the old man's head.

"All right!" said Uncle Dave, resignedly, as he sat down. "I'm through. You can't prove anything on me, anyhow."

"Well, if this ain't a picnic, then my name ain't Stretcher Bull," for it was indeed an old friend who had snatched the knife from Bill Sharpe's hand.

Owney now had the ruffian completely under control, and drawing a pair of handcuffs from his pocket he soon had them around Sharpe's wrists.

"Officer, take him along!" Owney commanded to some one in the dark hall.

"Be jabbers! Oi'll take him, an' Oi'll bet he don't git away from me *this* time!" was the response, as the same officer who had the controversy with Git Thar Owney and Bill Sharpe, on the street three weeks previously came into the room.

The policeman grasped Ugly Bill, and held him with professional firmness by the shoulder.

"Don't yer be playin' any o' yer blarney thricks wid me, d'y'e moind, or Oi'll smash the head av yer!" warned the officer.

"Shut yer mouth, you blathering fool!" was Sharpe's contemptuous response.

"Is he safe?" asked somebody who had not yet appeared from the hall.

Bill Sharpe started as he heard the voice, and he

glared into the darkness of the hall like a wild beast at bay.

"Yes, he's all right now," answered Owney; "you can come in."

Slowly and sheepishly Jim Riggan stole into the room, and then looked at Bill Sharpe with a triumphant grin, that was, however, three-fourths fear. Sharpe scowled back as if he could not quite understand what Jim Riggan was doing there.

Then the truth flashed across his mind like a hot blast from a glass furnace.

"You don't mean ter say?" he gasped while his eyes seemed to fairly emit sparks;—"You don't mean ter say as yer have turned informer—that you've gone back on the gang?"

Jim Riggan looked as if he would very much like to have avoided answering the query; then, reflecting that Bill Sharpe was handcuffed and in the grasp of a stalwart blue-coat, he plucked up courage and replied, stoutly, though with inward quaking:

"Yes, Bill; I have gone back on the gang. I have determined to live an honest life after this. Mr. Dawson is in *hock*, an' you'll soon be there, an' I don't want none of it in mine. Besides, Bill Sharpe, you've played dirt on me a good many times, an' this is where I get even, d'ye see?"

Ugly Bill listened to the speech of Riggan with a look of withering scorn on his face.

"So," he said, drawing a long breath through his set teeth with a hissing sound, "you've gone back on the gang, have yer?"

"Yes, Bill, that's what!"

"Well, Jim Riggan, do you know what you are?"

"I guess I know about what you'd call me, but I don't care for that."

"You don't?"

"Not a cent's worth."

"Well, shall I tell you?"

"You can if you like."

"You are a white-livered coward and a whipped cur."

Jim Riggan grinned.

"I just wish I had my hands free for one minute," and Bill looked as if he would.

"Indade, then, an' yer don't git yer hands for half a minute, so yer don't," broke in the officer.

"You see I hold the best of this deal, Bill, so you may as well take it good-naturedly. The more you talk the worse you make it," retorted Riggan, with an exasperating chuckle.

This chuckle was more than Ugly Bill could stand! With an oath he pulled himself away from the policeman, and before anybody could prevent him had raised his two manacled hands and dealt Jim Riggan a blow on the temple with the handcuffs that stretched him senseless.

It was the last opportunity he had to revenge himself on his late partner for his treachery, but it was effective, for Jim Riggan never spoke again, and when he was taken out of Owls' Nest it was as a corpse.

"Take him away, officer! I'll bring the old man," said Owney.

He called down six officers whom he had left in the upper hall and installed them in the kitchen with instructions to arrest every person that came to the den.

In half an hour Sharpe and Uncle Dave were in the police-station cell and in due time they found their way to Sing Sing, the police finding plenty of charges on which to convict the old man, while Ugly Bill Sharpe got a life sentence for the murder of Jim Riggan.

Nearly all the members of the Hoot Owls' Society were arrested. A few proved themselves to be peddlers and working people, who had never been involved in the lawless proceedings of the majority of the society, but most of them accompanied Uncle Dave and Bill Sharpe to Sing Sing Penitentiary.

After disposing of the prisoners Owney and Norman Reynolds returned to New Haven, where, the next day, the Oxbridge Football Eleven were publicly entertained by the victorious Yale boys, and where Git Thar Owney was loudly lauded for his excellent work in the match.

The Englishmen, while feeling a natural discomfiture at their defeat, were still generous enough to admit that they had been fairly outplayed.

"We will come again, though, at some future time, when I hope we shall take the championship back with us to the old country," declared Basil Brooke, with a smile.

"Any time you want to try it, you will find Yale ready," returned Norman Reynolds, lightly. "Yale was never yet afraid to take up any challenge involving strength and pluck, and I don't think she ever will be."

"I don't think she ever will, either," assented Brooke, with honest candor.

The Oxbridge Eleven went home the week after with the best feeling toward their conquerors.

Gilbert Dawson got a sentence of ten years in the penitentiary for forgery and conspiracy, and went to prison in spite of the wealth of his father, who came all the way from San Francisco to try and save his son from punishment for his misdeeds.

Stretcher Bull still rows occasionally from New York to New Haven just to see his friend, Norman Reynolds, as he says, who, by the way, is to be married very soon to the sweetest girl in New Haven—Clarice Le Fevre.

"And for our present happiness we are largely indebted to the young fellow who pledged himself to me that Yale should win, and that no one should stand between my love and myself."

"You are right, Norman," returned Clarice. "As I have before said, the best friend we both have is Git Thar Owney!"

THE END.

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